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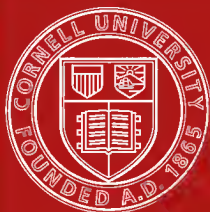
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**SILENT HIGHWAYS
OF THE JUNGLE**

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AWAY FROM THE RIVER LAY THE SILENT FOREST
WITH ITS HAUNTING MEMORIES.

SILENT HIGHWAYS THE JUNGLE: being the record of an adventurous journey across Peru to the Amazon.

By G. M. DYOTT, F.R.G.S.

LONDON

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TO
"THE LADY OF THE MIST"
THIS BOOK IS
DEDICATED.

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INTRODUCTION

PERU, the land of the ancient Inca races, is probably the least known and least developed of any of the great South American Republics. It is a country full of surprises and contrasts ; the unexpected always happens, and to travel through its borders one must be prepared to face every variation in climate imaginable. Its topographical configuration and the cold Humboldt current which comes sweeping up from the South Pole along its shores, are the two main factors which are responsible for these idiosyncrasies. Sandy deserts vibrating with heat, mountain peaks glistening in the land of eternal snow, deep rocky gorges and vast tropical forests are all within a few days' ride of each other.

Distances are relatively short, but the difficulties encountered in traversing them are colossal. Range after range bars the traveller's progress as he journeys eastward from the coast, and when, after weeks of incessant travelling, he finally emerges on the flat ground of the Amazon and its tributaries, his passage is blocked by miles of impenetrable forest through which it is impossible to proceed. Forced to travel by river, periodic whirlpools and rapids make progress slow and dangerous. Even when these are left behind,

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

submerged logs are a continual menace to navigation, and the rivers wind and wriggle over the low-lying ground, covering two or three times the actual distance represented by a straight line drawn from one point to another.

To the eastward of the great Andean chain lies the Montaña, or region of woods—a vast expanse of country, little known, and covered with a tangle of forest growth through which innumerable rivers have carved their way. It is extremely difficult of access, sparsely populated except for savages, and, in many cases, quite unexplored. Expeditions that have penetrated into these parts invariably come back with stories of hardships and privations that are more pleasant to read about than experience; but the fact that they come back at all signifies that they have been successful.

The story set forth in the following chapters is typical of the vicissitudes which beset the traveller who ventures into the wilder sections of the country. No attempt has been made at embroidery, as the bare facts in themselves are interesting enough as they stand, and it is to be hoped that any lack of literary merit may be offset by the unusual nature of the narrative itself.

The journey was undertaken at the instigation of Mr. A. B. Leguia, now President of Peru, with a view to ascertaining the feasibility of aerial transport into these remote but exceedingly rich sections of the Republic, where it is obvious railways cannot penetrate for many years to come. To the uninitiated the idea might seem preposterous, yet there is nothing extraordinary about it for those who have studied the question in all its details;

INTRODUCTION

the really strange part is that so few people see sufficiently far enough ahead to appreciate the true value of aviation.

While the narrative deals almost exclusively with remote parts of the interior on the eastern slope of the Andes, it must not be assumed that all Peru is inhabited by savages—far from it. On the coast, and in the mountains, are large centres of learning, big industrial enterprises, and great openings for still further commercial development when capital is available for the purpose. The refinement and intellectual development of the people are second to none on the great American continent, and they can boast of an ancient civilisation dating back into the dim, distant ages that is of historic interest to the whole world. Few countries with such a record of antiquity behind them can also lay claim to unexplored regions within their boundaries that are enough to satisfy the most adventurous spirits of modern times.

For those who are unfamiliar with the Spanish language, a few pitfalls of pronunciation may easily be avoided by remembering the following rules: Ll is pronounced as *y*, i as *ee*, and j as *h*. Thus, Llamas would be pronounced as *Yamas*, Iquitos as *Eekeetos*, and Jibaro as *Heebaro*. N, written ñ, is equivalent to inserting *y* after the letter so marked; Marañon would therefore be pronounced *Maranyon*, or Muñoz as *Munyoʒ*. In the Indian words the *y* sound is always represented as in English—Yacu, Yampes, etc.; and the *ee* sound as *i*—Tehi, for example, being pronounced *Tay-hee*.

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

CHAPTER I

VIEWS from the deck of an ocean-going steamer, the coast-line of Peru, from one extremity to the other, appears as a dreary, unbroken panorama of desolate, bare, sun-baked mountains and plains. So far as the eye can ascertain, it is an uninhabited wilderness, backed by a range of mountains void of all traces of vegetation, and shrouded in a haze of tantalising persistency. Actually, there are large tracts of land under irrigation in the various coastal valleys, but these are so swallowed up in the general air of desolation which prevails that, to all intents and purposes, they do not exist. Such then is the gloomy and depressing spectacle which unfolds before the gaze of the expectant traveller as he approaches the shore of this truly remarkable country. It must have been stories of fabulous wealth in the interior which prompted the Spaniards of old to land and penetrate the wild mountain passes of the Andes ; however, as a high wall often only increases one's desire to view what is on the other side, so possibly this formidable rocky barrier, rising out of a wilderness of sand, only urged Pizarro and his men forward to explore the mysteries which its very presence seemed to indicate lay on the other side.

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

My own impression, on viewing the country for the first time, was very much of this order, and even on the particular occasion of which I write, when, with a rattling of chains and much shouting, the S.S. *Palena* came to anchor off the port of Pacasmayo, my mind was already at work contemplating the wonderful sights I was going to see in the not far distant future. On two previous occasions I had penetrated well into the interior of central Peru, but each time had retraced my steps before reaching the great forest country. Now I was bound for Iquitos, at the head waters of deep sea navigation on the great Amazon river itself, and in the heart of the primeval forest. This meant weeks of difficult riding over bleak mountain ridges, long, weary stretches on foot, followed by days of monotonous canoeing along the silent highways of the jungle. Once in Iquitos it was my intention to attempt a considerably more difficult journey, returning by a more northerly route across a little-known and uninhabited region, through the great barrier called the Pongo de Manseriche, and thence to Paita on the Pacific coast, some 200 miles north of where I was now about to land. It was not surprising that I viewed my surroundings with interest and speculated on the outcome of my long-cherished plans.

Pacasmayo is a typical town of the Peruvian littoral, sprawled out on the edge of an apparently limitless stretch of glaring white sand, and thoroughly uninviting from every aspect. A long, antique pier of structural ironwork, exposed to the full force of the heavy swells which periodically come heaving in from the Southern Pacific, sticks

PACASMAYO

its ungainly neck out from the shore into the less shallow water beyond, where coastal steamers can anchor near its head, and transfer their cargo by means of lighters to its flimsy structure. The only other point of interest in the place is the railway station, the terminus of a short spur line running up into the foot-hills of the Andes. The doings of the social and commercial world seem to be bound up in the arrival or departure of trains and steamers; but as only a bi-weekly service is maintained to the mountains, and not more than three steamers drop anchor in the open roadstead during the same period of time, the community spends most of its existence in a state of suspended animation.

The arrival of the *Palena*, although late in the day, caused the usual flurry of excitement. *Fleteros* came crowding round the ship's sides in their little row-boats, shouting amongst themselves, and offering their services to passengers who wished to be put on shore. By the time I had entrusted my belongings to the tender mercies of one of them, and performed the acrobatic feat of being transferred from the ship to the pier, darkness had fallen, and I made my way to the Hotel Ferrocarril in search of accommodation for the night.

The following morning, at the Customs Office, the shining barrel of my rifle caught the eye of an over-zealous inspector who was looking over my gear. Although I held a special permit, issued by the Peruvian Government, to carry it, nothing but the complete unpacking of all my possessions would satisfy him that I was not attempting a revolutionary movement. Rather than submit to

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this quite unnecessary procedure, I called on the chief of customs, to whom I happened to have a letter of introduction from my good friend Sr. Malaga in Salaverry. He was courtesy itself, and after I had explained my position everything was adjusted satisfactorily.

Foreigners travelling in this part of the world often labour under the delusion that letters of introduction are unnecessary formalities. This is obviously wrong, as the more one carries the easier it is to get about the country; besides, Peruvians, whether they be of the best families on the coast, or some petty half-caste official in the interior, are naturally reluctant about approaching European strangers. All that one wants is just a card of introduction, which is enough to open the gates of hospitality, and assist one over innumerable small obstacles which, although not great in themselves, are of considerable magnitude in the aggregate.

My belongings once clear of the Customs, I was free to arrange my departure for Cajamarca. The railway already referred to carries one rapidly over the major portion of the distance (105 kilometres, to be exact), and in so doing saves two or three days of very hard riding up the Jequetepeque valley. Ordinarily, I should have had to take one of the bi-weekly trains, but thanks to the courtesy of the Peruvian Corporation, who operate the line, I was able to make the journey in a private rail-car instead of the usual stuffy coach, and on June 3rd, in company with Sr. Esteves, chief accountant of the line, I started on my long trek eastward.

Seated comfortably under an awning, to keep

THE START

off the sun's rays, and the fresh morning air blowing in our faces, we sped along over the sandy desert at a speed of 60 kilometres an hour, stopping here and there to take photographs or else examine some curious rock formation which took my fancy. First, San Pedro flitted by with its orange trees and extensive tracts of irrigated land, then large holdings of cotton and sugar-cane or rice, a few settlements also, like Yonan or Llanllan, with their small *haciendas* and still smaller *chacras*. The further we went the more desolate became our surroundings; the irrigated lands, with their luxuriant green vegetation, gave way to great moraines of coarse gravel and piles of barren rock, with only an occasional cactus to relieve their sombre outlines. The mountains closed in on either side, and many a time it looked as if further progress would be out of the question, but the railway was not easily defeated, and with extraordinary skill oscillated from one bank of the river to the other, through deep cuttings and tunnels, twisting and turning and squeezing its way through what seemed to be the most impossible places, till at Chilete, the rail-head, 2,865 feet above sea level, it finally came to an abrupt end.

The seven hours occupied in making the journey passed all too quickly, and I would have much enjoyed further conversation with my companion, but as it was necessary for him to be back on the coast before evening shadows fell, he lost no time in handing me over to the stationmaster, and with a few kind words of farewell left me to my fate.

Although 2 p.m., no signs of life were visible amongst the dilapidated bamboo shanties which

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

surrounded the station; even the hotel-keeper was enjoying an afternoon siesta, and could not be aroused easily from the atmosphere of tranquil indifference which the place seemed to radiate. Considerable shaking revived him to such a point that he was able to take an intelligent interest in my wants, and by the time he had assigned me a clean little room to sleep in, he had become more or less talkative. I took advantage of the opportunity to enquire into possible means of continuing my journey to Cajamarca, and learnt that on the morrow, when the train arrived, there would be *arriero* and mules by the dozen to transport me anywhere at the word of command. I failed to see how men and beasts could ever be conjured up amongst such a deserted pile of rocks, but he assured me repeatedly that there was no cause for anxiety, and he himself would personally arrange everything for me. Until three o'clock to-morrow I was to make myself at home, doing anything I pleased: the whole town was at my disposal. With this last burst of hospitality, he and the stationmaster retired to the privacy of their own homes, and once more Chilte assumed the appearance of a deserted ash-heap.

For a moment I stood out in the open, under a clear blue sky, feeling that many days spent in such a place would cause the most vigorous individual to lapse into a complete state of forgetfulness. The sun blazed down with unrelenting vigour: its scorching rays reflected off every stone and pebble until the whole valley shimmered and rocked in its heat; then I also suffered a temporary lapse, and finding a sheltered spot near at hand, sixty



TRAIL LEAVING CHILETE FOR THE INTERIOR.

CHILETE

minutes of my own life went down on the records of eternity as a complete blank.

Later on in the afternoon I made short journeys up two of the three valleys which unite at this point to form the Jequetepeque ; the central fork, called the Magdalena, would be the one to take on the morrow, so there was no need to examine it now. The San Pablo had quite a torrent running down it, but the one to the southward was as dry as a bone, although I was told that in the rainy season it carries quite a large volume of water. Both are barren and deserted, and serve only as arteries of travel to more fertile lands on the top of the mountains beyond.

The cool air of the night came as a great relief, and I slept soundly, only to face another day of blinding heat in the sun. The morning did not bring any signs of activity such as I had been expecting ; nine o'clock passed, ten o'clock, eleven, and still silence reigned supreme in the stifling atmosphere of the narrow valley. At noon an odd donkey or two strayed quietly into the town from nowhere, and then a few mountain *cholos* appeared as if by magic from amongst the rocks. A little later droves of mules and donkeys began to arrive, accompanied by men, women, and children, most of the latter carrying big bundles, which were deposited near the railway track. Some of the mules also carried cargoes, and the general scene took on quite an animated appearance as packs were removed and the animals tethered in groups nearby to be fed. The human element deposited itself on the bare ground, displaying assortments of fruit for sale, and in noisy tones discussed the latest

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

news from the hills. Each minute brought new arrivals to join in the din, which was rapidly assuming formidable proportions. The climax was reached at 3 p.m., when the harsh hooting of a locomotive resounded up the valley, and the bi-weekly train came panting up the grade into the station, enveloped in a cloud of dust. The transformation was complete : Chilate was now the hub of the universe, an ant-hill of sweltering human energy.

It was eight o'clock before the pandemonium had subsided, and the majority of the natives had huddled themselves up in heaps amongst the bare rocks, sound asleep under the stars.

In the early hours of the following day an anti-climax was again touched as the train started back on its return journey to the coast ; bundles were then rolled up, packs adjusted, and the populace faded away as mysteriously as it had come. For a time the shouts of some particularly energetic *arriero* driving his mules homeward could be heard echoing amongst the mountains, but these became more and more faint till they also died away entirely, and Chilate once more settled down to another period of prolonged slumber.

Now, it happened that a certain Sr. Santiago Lozno, owner of a *hacienda* half-way between Chilate and Cajamarca, was one of the throng that had come down from the mountains, his object being the forwarding of some supplies recently arrived at the rail-head. He was introduced to me by Sr. Fernandini, the stationmaster, and at once proposed that I travel in company with his son, who, like myself, was bound for Cajamarca ; so

ON MULE BACK

it came about that, as the blanket of forgetfulness once more enveloped Chilete, Pedro Lozno and myself, mounted on sturdy mules, set our faces eastward, following the easy trail up the Magdalena valley.

The sun was high in the heavens, curiously marked lizards scurried over the burning rocks at our feet, and an occasional brightly coloured bird flitted across the path ahead of us. Here and there a few patches of sugar-cane were encountered, but for the most part the river held undisputed claim to the narrow strip of valley land, which, in turn, was fenced in by towering walls of sombre looking mountains. June being the dry season, there were frequent corners where we could forsake our narrow trail and take a short cut across some flat gravel bar, which greatly assisted our progress and added to the interest of the journey.

After four hours we rode into La Viña, taking lunch, and incidentally purchasing a fine mule for £20—a splendid animal, accustomed to the mountains, and in first-class condition for the long journey that lay before me.

An hour and three-quarters later we reached the village of Magdalena, having crossed to the north bank of the river at a point half-way between the two places. Outside the village I was greatly surprised to see two antique, rusty locomotives marooned in the centre of a small field of sugar-cane. Lozno explained that the railway had originally been built up to this point, and that some years ago a cloud-burst had washed most of it away; no money was forthcoming to make repairs, therefore the entire section above Chilete had been abandoned.

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

Our destination for the night, San Cristobel, was reached in the evening after $8\frac{3}{4}$ hours on the road, the last section of the journey being of particular interest, as we left the dry valley, and started a climb up the steep mountain sides, encountering on the way the first natural vegetation I had seen. Wild flowers were plentiful, and the air was fragrant with heliotrope, which blossomed in abundance on either side.

Sr. Lozno's farm was at an elevation considerably above this, and much too cold to support anything in the way of flowering shrubs ; nevertheless, it was a pleasant spot to arrive at, and I was offered all the hospitality possible at the hands of the family.

It seemed odd that after the infernal heat of Chilete one should ever have to complain of the cold, but Peru is full of surprises, and the unexpected generally seems to happen. When we got under weigh the next morning, there was a damp mist hanging round the mountain tops that penetrated to the marrow of one's bones. The trail was a series of disagreeable mud-holes, and conditions were so diametrically opposite to what we had experienced the day before that it was impossible to realise we were in the same world.

For two hours Lozno and myself rode up the undulating rock-strewn slopes which led to the summit of the divide, some 12,000 feet above sea level. The chill in the air remained even when the sun had dissipated the fog, reminding us of our elevated position in the world, and as we passed numerous pack-trains bound for the rail-head I almost envied them to think that within a few hours'



MAIN STREET, CAJAMARCA.

CAJAMARCA

time they would be perspiring in the heat, whereas many days would elapse before I should again feel really warm.

The descent to Cajamarca occupied an hour, and was rather steep ; but what a magnificent sight it was to look down into that great bowl-like valley where so many tragedies connected with the old Inca race had been enacted. Eucalyptus trees, although not indigenous to the country, had been planted extensively since the days of the Spaniards, and their graceful foliage, mixed with the large tracks of alfalfa and green pasture-land, produced a landscape-garden effect of great beauty.

Like other towns on the mountains, Cajamarca cannot be called modern in any sense of the word, but although shorn of its former grandeur, it is still a very important commercial centre, and the one hope of all its citizens is that the railway, whose present extremity lies shrivelled up at Chilete, will one day take a new lease of life and find a more appropriate terminus in their own picturesque town.

Nowhere in all my travels have I had to live under worse conditions than obtained at the Hotel Amazonas, where it was my misfortune to sojourn during four whole days, while preparations for the journey ahead of me went slowly forward. This place has as great a reputation amongst travellers for its filth as the Chinaman's restaurant nearby has for its cheap and bountiful food supply ; but the low cost of living of the latter did not in any way compensate for the dirty surroundings of the former, and nothing would persuade me to remain longer in the place than was absolutely essential.

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

The problem of continuing on my way alone was not so easy as it seemed. There was no scarcity of men or animals to undertake a trip to Chilete, but to cross the Marañon, and go to Chachapoyas or beyond, was a task no one would consider.

To avoid wasting valuable time I bought three more mules, which gave me four in all, but when I had them and their pack-saddles ready for the road, I found it just as hard to get the services of a *muchacho* who would act as guide. All the men who presented themselves discoursed at length on the dangers of such a trip: robbers and bears would be encountered, so they must first consult their wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters; besides, two days would be required to go home and make their arrangements; in other words, they had no wish to accompany me.

One curious individual promised to come, but never turned up at the hour mentioned. I accidentally met him later on in the day, and asked rather angrily why it was that he had said he would come when he had no intention of doing so. He replied quite calmly that it seemed so rude to say no to the *señor* that he had to say yes.

Some one suggested that the chief of police would be a good man to see, and I found him full of promises, but here again the mythical man whom he said would be ready at ten o'clock never appeared, so I went to head-quarters to make enquiries. The chief was out, but his resourceful assistant came to the rescue. "No *muchacho* as yet, *señor*, but just wait a minute," and we sallied forth into the street, accosting several vagabonds in succession that were loafing outside. None showed any desire to go

DIFFICULTIES OF GETTING MEN

even as far as Celendin, which, although barely fifteen leagues away, was for them like an excursion into the unknown.

Late in the afternoon my hopes ran high as I saw the chief himself, with a *muchacho* at heel, bearing down on me in the street ; it looked hopeful, but when I divulged the direction in which I was going the timid fellow refused to come on account of robbers which, he said, infested the trail.

I went back to the hotel in despair, only to find a man sitting on the doorstep actually anxious to pilot me as far as Celendin. He seemed to be full of energy, said he knew the trail, and would provide his own animal instead of going on foot. I could hardly believe my ears, but it was a fact, nevertheless. With a few *soles* in advance, and instructions to be on hand at six the following morning, I went to say good-bye to my various friends, who had done their best to make my sojourn pleasant.

One man in particular I wanted to see was called Enrique Sourita Mariscal ; he had taken on the task of shoeing my four mules, and had done it in first-class style. It is seldom that one meets really energetic and capable men in the interior, so that when one does it is only natural to recall them with pleasure.

For those who have anything to do with Latin-American countries the greatest of all virtues necessary is patience—of the vices, the most essential is a complete indifference to time. Without one of these two life becomes positively unbearable, as it is immaterial to the average native whether a thing is done to-day, to-morrow, or not at all. I can safely say that every morning during

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

the six months which followed my departure from Cajamarca I was called upon to exercise patience and self-restraint in some degree, more or less. On looking back, I often wonder how it was I did not murder, out of sheer desperation at their stupidity, every *arriero* or *muchacho* that accompanied me in my travels. My exit from this ancient city was a typical case in point.

Instead of six, we left at nine, and on enquiring of the boy why he had not been on hand at the hour arranged, he replied cheerfully that the place where we would rest for the night was only a short distance away, and his mother had told him he needed more sleep, so he supposed nine o'clock would be quite early enough to make a start. It never seemed to occur to him that I might know the distance that lay before us, or that all arrangements had been made for having the animals on hand at six o'clock. Words, of course, were quite useless, and after two hours' waiting my patience was pretty nearly exhausted; without further ado the cavalcade clattered out of the town over the old Inca road, the boy taking the lead, followed by the three pack animals, with myself bringing up the rear.

We crept along at a snail's pace to Baños, and thence over a slim thread of a trail to Polloc, which we reached in seven hours.

It might be well to mention that the Inca roads are not the marvels of engineering skill which they are generally supposed to be. They consist solely of flattish rocks laid out on the ground in a more or less regular manner, suitable, no doubt, for the old Incas who always travelled on foot, but quite

ROBBERS

impossible for mules, who show their opinion by invariably avoiding them.

In the evening, after supper, as we sat round the table smoking, my host, Sr. Laredo, told me many things of interest about the part of the world he lived in. He confirmed the stories current concerning the robbers who infested the district, and who will not stop at murder if it suits their purpose. Apparently they live in a village called Encañada, close by, and are so numerous that the authorities cannot cope with them; the result is they rob and kill as they please, but generally choosing defenceless pedestrians rather than armed men on horseback. He added that he had personally killed several, and always carried a rifle across his saddle-bow for fear of attack.

Just how true all of this was I could not say, but I do know that he so unnerved my boy with his stories that when I woke at five-fifteen the next morning I found he had decamped for good, taking one or two of my belongings with him. For a moment it looked as if my return to Cajamarca was inevitable, but luck favoured me, as a solitary mountain *cholo*, whom Sr. Laredo knew, was going to Celendin, and agreed to accompany me for the price of a couple of *soles*. It turned out very fortunate for me that my original man had deserted, for I discovered he knew nothing of the trail, and would probably have landed me in a much worse predicament.

Sr. Laredo accompanied me for about one hour before bidding me farewell, leaving me and my newly found *cholo* friend—whose face, by the way, was considerably swollen, and bound

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

up with dirty rags—to continue on the road in solitary state.

The day's ride was one of unusual length and exceptional melancholy. It took twelve hours to reach our destination, and as my man's aching jaw prevented him from carrying on any conversation whatsoever, I hardly spoke a word during the entire time. Outside of the irregular moaning of the wind, and the chink of cold, icy mountain torrents, scurrying along in all the vigour of early youth, the silence was rarely broken.

Much has been written about the atmosphere of loneliness and despair which broods over these deserted Andean uplands, but words can never describe the true feeling of utter desolation which prevails.

My personal discomfort was greatly increased as a driving mist obscured the sun most of the day, making it difficult to keep the trail, especially on the last upward slope to the summit of the pass. Here we halted fifteen minutes to allow the animals to rest and nibble at the short grass which grew about. The air was bitterly cold, and a piercing north wind came blustering over the ridge with Hunlike aggressiveness.

Quite a large number of flowers, resembling enormous daisies, littered the ground, smiling up in friendly fashion, and bidding us welcome to their arctic home; but I noticed they had no stalks, and lay flat on the turf, as if frightened to raise their precious heads above the grass roots for fear of having them blown off by the icy blast which swept over them.

Before darkness fell we had reduced our altitude

THE END OF A HARD RIDE

by several thousands of feet, the atmosphere had changed to that of England in springtime, and not far off in the valley below was our destination, spread out in chequer-board formation on a carpet of restful green.

At seven o'clock we drew rein at the house of Sr. Diaz Bourga, to whom I had a letter of introduction. He was a large, corpulent man, extremely amiable, and anxious to assist me in every way possible. He suggested that after such a strenuous twelve hours my animals should not continue the journey without first being given a full day's rest in which to recuperate. I fully concurred, as, in addition, there were many things I wanted to do and see myself before continuing on my way.

Both in cleanliness and intelligence I found the population of Celendin away ahead of that of Cajamarca ; furthermore, they were not anything like as timid when it came to leaving their native heath. I spoke to several men about going with me to Chachapoyas, and no one showed any signs of misgiving concerning the dangers of the trip ; it was simply a question of pay, which was easily adjusted, and in short order a young fellow was engaged on satisfactory terms.

My gear needed a certain amount of rearranging, and further purchases of camp equipment had to be made, as from now on I would spend my nights camped out in the open, there being few places where suitable shelter would be found.

I have often been asked the best way to pack one's belongings when travelling in the interior, but I am reluctant about giving advice, as views on the subject differ so widely, and every one has his own

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

particular likes and dislikes. There are some who think that the nearer they come to travelling in European fashion the better; and although I am quite aware that leather suit-cases and trunks have been transported over some of the worst country imaginable, I have never considered this a good argument for doing likewise, as leather rots and turns mouldy, and trunks are very bulky, even for the best trails. In the case of odd-shaped packages, also, these are frequently left behind and forgotten, or if they are insecurely wrapped up are liable to be damaged on the road.

With my own kit I always strived to obtain compactness, lightness in weight, and uniformity as to size; then, as my travels were not confined to the mountains alone, but included journeys on foot and in canoe, I had to introduce further modifications to suit the last-named conditions also.

It is not unusual to hear people talk of the huge cases which their Indians have transported for hundreds of miles as if it were something to be proud of, but these same people never mention the number of similar cases which those same cargo-bearers have accidentally allowed to fall down a cliff, or drop into some swift-running river—a frequent occurrence if an Indian finds his task a little beyond him, or is bullied by his master.

Almost invariably I have found it easier to get six Indians to carry 30 lb. each than two to pack a load of 90 lb. each; or again, one man would much sooner carry a compact, comfortable load of 40 lb. rather than half that weight consisting of long and irregular bundles which get caught on every

PLANNING FOR A JOURNEY

protruding branch or rock, and generally impede his progress.

My equipment was reduced to the simplest possible terms : just four wooden boxes, such as are found all over South America for shipping the usual double five-gallon tins of kerosene oil. I had replaced nails with wood screws, covered the outside of each box with waterproof paper, and then sewn two layers of sacking neatly on top of that again, taking care to pad corners and edges first. The open end of each box had a waterproof flap, and inside a piece of wood jammed in between the sides to act as a spacing block, which prevented the sides being bulged in when the rope had been tightly tied round the outside. Two of the cases weighed 60 lb. each when packed tightly with the spare gear, the other two weighed 40 lb. each ; in addition, one neat, short bundle, consisting of camp-bed, tripod, and blankets, weighed 40 lb. ; thus, my entire belongings made two compact cargoes of 120 lb., which any normal mule could carry easily. Any other odds and ends under 20 lb. at the outside would be carried by the spare animal. Mules, as a rule, can carry loads ranging from 200 to 300 lb., but later experience showed me that on long journeys of steady going, day after day, the 120 lb. I allowed was too much, and 100 or even 80 lb. was a better weight to figure on.

In the woods these same boxes were handled individually by the Indians without complaint, and in canoes they stowed away as snugly as could be. Yet another advantage was that, being uniform in size, they could be arranged to form a convenient table ; they also made a comfortable seat when

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

necessary, and at night an excellent wall to break the force of the wind. In the river country, clothing and such things are more conveniently carried in light bags made locally, and treated with rubber to keep out the water in case of an upset, but cameras and tins of films, with their sharp corners, soon cut the fabric if transported in this way, and are therefore safer and better in light-weight wooden cases such as I have already described.

CHAPTER II

AFTER two agreeable days in the refreshing atmosphere of Celendin I once more found myself striking out over the eastern trail, eight o'clock having sounded before we were well on the road. As usual, my intentions of leaving at the reasonable hour of six had been frustrated, only on this occasion by the kind attentions of my warm-hearted host, who was not at all anxious to have me go away so soon. My new man had been on hand early, and seemed quite energetic; he was much cleaner than the brave who accompanied me from Polloc, who was a filthy fellow, although I must admit that this did not impede his efficiency, which was of the first order.

A nice level stretch over the valley was soon a thing of the past, and we were confronted with a quick climb of 3,000 feet up on to a razor-like edge in cloud-land, then an equally abrupt descent of 8,000 feet way down to the banks of the Marañon at Balsas. We camped at five o'clock alongside a shack in the bottom of a narrow ravine, which joined the main valley at no great distance away.

The river at this point describes numerous contortions, but there is one straight stretch of more or less smooth water about 400 yards long where balsa rafts were originally used to ferry one over,

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

hence the reason for the place being called Balsas. A respectable suspension bridge now spans the foaming waters, and the traveller is thereby saved considerable inconvenience and delay incidental to the old methods of crossing.

At this season of the year the valley of the Marañon takes on a decidedly funereal aspect, which it retains up to December ; the many small trees and shrubs which in the wet season brighten the landscape with their verdure are now apparently dead, and the dry leaves, still adhering to their branches, seem to confirm the impression that they have ceased to compete in the struggle for existence, and have left the field of battle clear to the sun, which glares down from the heavens above in triumphant glory. Mellowed by the shadows of evening, or glistening in the abundant moonlight of the tropical starry heaven, it is a bewitchingly beautiful spot at any season, what with its weird shadows slanting in all directions, fantastic outline of cactus growth, and strange rock formations thrown heavenwards.

Two of my mules were slightly lame as the result of the precipitous trail we had just passed over, and although I allowed them a full day's rest, it did not help very much, as at night they were subjected to the ravages of vampire bats, causing a further drain on their already reduced vitality.

For two nights I revelled in my surroundings, but my joy of being warm, and at an elevation of only 3,000 feet above sea level, was greatly offset by the thought of a 14,000 feet pass, called Calle Calle, which lay between me and Chachapoyas. The name was given to it by the old Incas, and translated, means "Hush, Hush," or "The Great Silence."



THE MARAÑON

Just how it was to be surmounted was already causing me some uneasiness.

On the east bank of the Marañon our course lay due north for a mile or so, past the village of Balsas, and then up a ravine, keeping to the bed of a small stream that came chattering down from nowhere in particular. Thousands of wild lime-trees, laden with fruit, lined its banks, the ground beneath yellow with fruit rotting where it fell. Usually, I cannot recommend river beds as trails, but in an hour or two I looked back on this particular one with feelings of positive joy in comparison with the ledges we found ourselves scrambling over.

At the foot of one very precipitous descent we encountered a dead mule in the last stages of decay; it spoke eloquently of what was in store for us. "There may be other dead mules higher up," I remarked to my *muchacho*, but the point was lost on him completely. It turned out to be almost a prophetic statement, as the big pack animal showed signs of fatigue, and his cargo had to be transferred to the small black one. An hour later even the pack saddle was too much for him, and he refused to budge an inch, so I secured him to a rock, and continued up the interminable slope to a more level spot. The boy went back to fetch up the exhausted animal, while I proceeded on alone to explore the trail a mile or so in advance. Fortune favoured me once again, as an old tumble-down shelter, the remnants of a place known as Carixal, was but a short distance away, and nearby it a small spring of clean water. Hurrying back I brought up the remaining animals, and at five-thirty we were camped for the night.

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

It had been a strenuous day's work, but the many magnificent views obtained more than compensated for the hardships encountered. This remarkable valley, which we crossed in a diagonal direction, appeared like an enormous gash on the face of the earth, a scar emblematical of the battle fought between earth and water. Even to-day the river is not satisfied with having sawn its way out from amongst the giant peaks which held it in bondage for so many centuries; it still grumbles and growls away to itself, undermining the mountain sides whenever possible, and then angrily sweeping away the debris that comes sliding down as a result.

The pessimist says that troubles never come singly, quite oblivious of the fact that blessings follow the same rule. I had been the recipient of one or two of the latter quite recently and was hardly expecting another for some time to come, yet fate was about to spring a pleasant surprise on me.

The tinkle of a bell and shouts of "*mula, mula,*" broke the silence of the evening air, as two *arriero*, with six mules, drew up at our encampment. They were two brothers, Montoya by name, on their way back to Chachapoyas, without any cargo to hinder their progress; herein lay the solution of the troubles which beset me, and before turning in Manuel Montoya, the elder of the two, was the proud possessor of my sick mule, his only obligation being the transportation of its cargo to my destination. It resulted, not only in a load off the mule's back, but a very decided weight off my own mind, as well.

A REST

It was a cheerful party which set out the next morning, and the three men fraternised together in a way that amused me not a little. Yet again my pleasure was short-lived ; the little black mule now began to show signs of exhaustion. Dark clouds hovering round the mountain tops were a clear indication that it was quite impossible to cross the divide to-day, and after ascending 3,000 feet we pitched camp once more just below the level of the clouds, in a cool atmosphere, on a grassy patch surrounded with bushes and small trees.

The difference in climate between the east and west sides of the Marañon valley is very pronounced, there being much more rain on the eastern slope and considerably more vegetation, especially in the neighbourhood of 10,500 feet, where there is a belt of dense forest growth of small trees.

After a restful night under the stars conditions did not look any more hopeful ; the morning broke misty and cold, and the higher up we got the worse it became. We passed a very good *tambo* or shelter called Chanchillo, which, with good animals, we should have reached the first night out from Balsas ; then a little later a spot called Tambo Viejo, or the " Old Shelter "—so old, in fact, that nothing remained to indicate its presence except a clearing amongst the trees. Just after this place the remnants of a trail appeared coming in on our right. I asked the men about it.

" Oh, it goes to Balsas, and is more direct."

" Then why did we not take it ? " I asked.

" Because it is worse than the one we came by,"

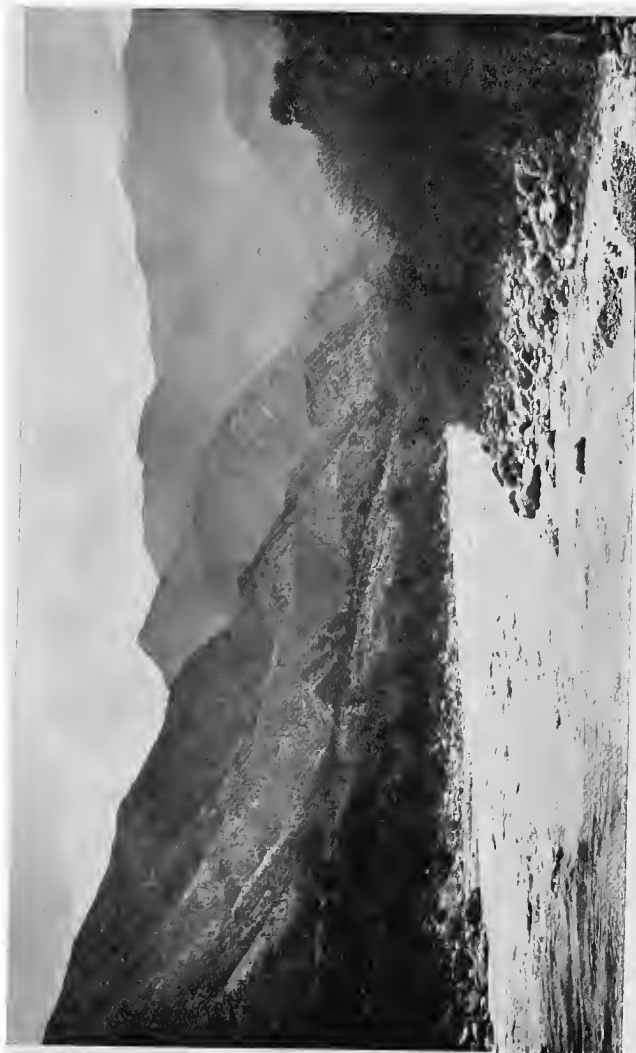
SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

was the reply. It must have been an appalling piece of work, as I could not seriously conceive anything worse than the one we had travelled over.

Although no rain had fallen in the night we had only gone a hundred yards when a drizzle set in, which soon turned to heavy rain driven before a strong wind. It became bitterly cold, the rain changed to sleet, and I was soaked to the skin. The little mule was entirely played out ; he hung his head down dejectedly, and would only advance a few yards at a time. It was no good driving him ; with the utmost patience I coaxed him forward little by little, sorely tempted to turn back, but I continued under the unpleasant conditions which prevailed, and pitched camp close to the upper edge of the tree line, as it was palpable that the conquest of the pass would have to be postponed until the morrow.

Once more I bargained with Montoya for the transportation of a second cargo to Chachapoyas, but I paid him in cash this time, rather than hand over the sick mule, as I preferred, in spite of the set-backs which we had experienced, to nurse this animal and get him to our destination. I constructed a rude shelter of leaves and branches, in which, after infinite pains, I was able to start a good fire. It was with the greatest difficulty that I got my gear in place, and never have I spent such a disagreeable day, or still more disagreeable night. The rain and sleet descended upon us incessantly, and there was nothing to do but huddle by the fire and try to keep warm.

All night long the wind howled and whistled



THE MARAÑÓN AT BALSAS.

A TERRIBLE NIGHT

overhead, not in one continual roar, but in periodic waves of varying intensity. One minute it seemed as if the storm had passed, but the next a booming in the distance proclaimed the approach of another. The spirits of the wind were indeed let loose ; they came jostling and scurrying over the tree tops, borne on the tempest, and shrieking with delight at the confusion they wrought. Nearer and nearer they came, till, with one last burst of fury, they swept overhead, showering down rain and breaking off branches which crashed to earth, miraculously missing our small encampment. Not satisfied with the havoc thus made, these restless spirits would come hurrying back on their tracks with even greater violence, and so on all night through, backwards and forwards swept the storm, unable to make up its mind whether to leave us alone or not. As the morning approached it finally exhausted itself, and after a short sleep I awoke enveloped in a damp mist, without a breath of wind stirring.

The little mule, still exhausted, had once more to be coaxed a few yards at a time over the bleak *puna* land. Fortunately, the atmosphere was clear and there was no rain, but the wind was cold, and as we approached the divide it became very chilly. On the summit the wind came swirling over in an icy blast that seemed to sap one's last spark of energy. Round about lay numerous skeletons of animals which had succumbed to the hardships of the trail, and for about the fourth time I had a mind to return and not continue a journey which had started so unfortunately. Looking back, I could see the clearing of Tambo

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

Viejo below me, and also, away over on the other side of the Marañon valley, a spot we had passed seven days ago. How easy it would have been to slip down the mountain side and laze away a few weeks in the warmth and comfort of Balsas ! It was a pleasant thought, but one I was not inclined to linger over, so I hardened my heart, secured the lead rope of the sick mule to my saddle, and with a sharp grade in my favour simply hauled the unfortunate animal down-hill into a more equable climate, 2,000 feet below, where I left him to rest, proceeding on by myself to Pomococha.

Further down the abrupt and rocky nature of the trail changed to an undulating series of mud-holes, representing a new form of frightfulness which I had not encountered before ; the valleys, also, on this side of the divide, assumed quite a different aspect. Trees of small size were abundant. There was much fresh green colour in the landscape, and the sound of running waters was constantly in my ears.

I passed Luy near the upper limit of forest growth, on a boggy slope, where one of the main forks of the Pomococha river rises. It was a collection of some four or five huts about a quarter of a mile apart, and the most cheerless spot imaginable. Pomococha, on the other hand, looked inviting, and at one time must have been quite a settlement. To-day a single tumble-down shelter remains, but it had a roof for which I was thankful, and I was glad to sleep under it for two nights in preference to being out in the open. It needed a thorough cleansing, in view of the fact that stray cattle generally used it to shelter

POMOCOCHA

in out of the cold, but this was not a long task, and a fire was soon burning merrily, over which the evening meal was prepared.

Montoya and his brother had taken full advantage of the good weather to get as far away from the cold zone as possible with the sick mule that I had sold them ; I had not seen them since early morning, and had travelled most of the day alone. My boy had remained with the small black mule till a late hour, covered him with a blanket, and had then come on to the *tambo*, carrying the bridle and pack saddle himself. The following day he went back to where the animal had been left, quite expecting to find him dead, but fortunately he was alive, and reached camp in the afternoon, where he could get fairly good pasture and a little sunshine to warm him up. None of the mules liked the heavy frost which descended upon us at night ; we did our best to arrange things for their comfort, but they seemed to prefer to get out into the open and shiver.

The back of our trip, so far as Chachapoyas was concerned, was now broken, and in comparison we had quite a smooth trail ahead of us ; provided we took it in easy stages there was no doubt but what we should arrive safely at our destination with all our animals and belongings intact.

The journey to Leimebamba, a small settlement at the junction of the rivers Pomococha and Patria, was over green pasture-land, and through charming woodland glades, cool and fresh in the morning air. The sign of alfalfa growing in abundance on the outskirts of the settlement reminded me that the animals deserved a good

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

feed by way of a change, as since leaving Celendin their fare had been very meagre.

They were devouring some tender green leaves with great relish when I was accosted by a *chola* woman, who explained that she had two daughters lying very ill and would I come and minister unto them. It was in vain I protested that I was an engineer and knew nothing about medicine; that made no difference to her—I was a *gringo*, that is to say, a foreigner—and therefore knew more about medicine than the natives, so would I come at once. I supposed that a visit would do no harm, so allowed myself to be carried off bodily to the hut where the old woman's daughters lay.

I was ushered into a room from which every ray of light and breath of fresh air had been religiously excluded. On a couple of rude beds lay the sick girls, both as white as paper, and apparently dead. It looked more like a case for the undertaker. A brief examination showed that they both had high temperatures, but what horrified me was the colour of the skin, which, in the dim candle-light, had all the appearance of leprosy. I called for water and applied it to an ugly looking spot, only to find the surface come away very easily, exposing what appeared to be a secondary skin below. It took me some seconds to grasp the real situation—both girls were smeared over from head to foot with a white, pasty-like substance, a concoction prepared locally from herbs and considered a great remedy against any kind of fever.

It did not need a skilled doctor to see that a thorough washing, with an ample supply of light

WORKING MIRACLES

and fresh air, were the most essential elements to meet the case ; accordingly, with these instructions, and plenty of quinine provided from my personal stock, I repaired to another hut for lunch.

There was to be no peace for me that day ; within an hour my patients had regained consciousness, and according to the mother had completely recovered. The news spread like wild-fire all through the settlement, and in a short interval of time I was pestered by natives all clamouring that I come and see their relatives who also were sick and ailing. It was futile to resist, or turn a deaf ear to their persistent demands. Reluctantly I made the rounds of the village, administering drugs, cleansing the sores of the injured with permanganate of potash, advising the plentiful use of clean water and fresh air, and in general preaching the first principles of hygiene.

It was incredible that there could be so much sickness in so tiny a place, and I roughly estimated that not more than ten per cent of the population were healthy. It was a painful experience, but I shall always recall the grateful words of these poor ignorant people for the little things I was able to do for them ; they offered me fruits, money, furniture, and goodness knows what in return for my services, but I was quite satisfied with their thanks and let it go at that. My mules derived considerable benefit ; and, since I would not accept anything, a good many extra bundles of alfalfa were given to the hungry animals, for which I had a shrewd idea no charge was made.

After many hours' delay I was escorted out of the town by the multitude as far as the bridge

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

which spans the River Patria, and, with cries of "Viva el gringo!" raised on all sides, I continued over the broken trail which was to lead me to the great Amazon country.

The day was well advanced, but the afternoon sun was decidedly hot, and my animals made excellent progress, thanks to the sumptuous banquet which they had just partaken of. Before darkness descended we had reached a point in the trail where it branches westward over the Utcubamba to Santo Thomas. Pitching camp close to the river in a sheltered spot I turned in early, thinking over the events of the day in comparison with those already passed. No two had been exactly alike and the majority totally different. The biting frost, which had made night in the mountain passes so disagreeable, was now a nightmare of the past; the air had become mild again, and even the moon, shining in all its splendour, seemed to radiate a little warmth from its usually cold silvery rays. A few days ago I had been fighting with nature for the life of my animals—and my own, as well, for that matter—now I lay stretched out in the open, without a care in the world to worry me, all appreciation of time and matter having been lost in the sense of freedom and farness which surrounded me.

A curious feature of these parts is the very marked line which exists both at the upper and lower limits of forest growth; above 10,500 feet the atmosphere is too cold to support vegetation, and below 7,800 feet it is too dry, this latter being the approximate lower limit of the cloud stratum. The high mountain tops to the westward are, of

CHILLO

course, bare but for *pampa* grass; then comes a broad band of dark wooded slopes, followed by another bare stretch of sunburnt grass, with occasional limestone cliffs to relieve the monotony. In the central zone there are a number of Indian huts, some of which are quite picturesque, with their whitewashed walls and tidy clearings surrounding them.

The next day we travelled on leisurely to Chillo via Suta, over a trail which had its ups and downs but was child's play after what we had been accustomed to; the major portion of it was through a semi-tropical zone producing bananas and oranges in profusion, hot but intensely interesting, and whispering the secrets of the great tropical forests which were to come. My sick mule needed very careful nursing, but patience won in the end and brought him safely into camp with the other animals.

As our progress all day had been steadily down the valley it was natural to expect a warmer place to stop at for the night, but not at all; the trails never do what you expect of them in this part of the world: this one at the last moment suddenly left the banks of the river, as if tired of its company, and zigzagged up a slope, resulting not only in our losing all the benefits of our day's march, but actually landing us at a higher elevation than where we started from at the bridge of Santo Thomas.

Chillo is called a *hacienda*, but it is hardly an ideal one, for there are no natural springs of water, rain being the only supply of this rather essential commodity. I must have struck a particularly

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

dry spell, as I could not even procure a potful to cook my meal in from the surly half-caste administrator, a gaunt, yellow-looking fellow, apparently suffering from all the complaints known to spleen and liver. There was only one dirty pool of green liquid from which the animals drank sparingly.

As already pointed out, the wide and unexpected variations in climate are rather perplexing to the traveller, as he can rarely predict from day to day what temperatures he is going to encounter. The last stage of my ride to Chachapoyas was a typical case in point.

By the light of an almost full moon we left Chillo at the cold early hour of 5 a.m., maintaining a more or less steady down-grade all the way to Condechaca, dry and bursting with heat in the noonday sun. From this point we once more laboriously climbed up into the wooded zone, waterlogged and dripping with moisture; the ascent was very severe, consisting of a series of steps cut into the mountain side. For some miles we floundered over a muddy track through the scanty forest, and then encountered another rocky descent to our destination, where a more temperate climate reigned.

At a distance Chachapoyas looked like a big city, but at closer range I found it to be the usual array of adobe houses, picturesque in their dilapidation. A more intimate acquaintance with it and its citizens revealed the real charm of the place, and I spent several days of keen enjoyment at the house of Sr. Pablo Pizarro, deputy for the district. The climate struck me as colder than



LOOKING ACROSS THE MARAÑON VALLEY.

ARRIVAL IN CHACHAPOYAS

that of Cajamarca, although this may be due to the more exposed position which the town occupies on a slightly inclined plateau. The atmosphere was mild and invigorating, yet within an hour or so's ride towards the valley of the Utcubamba any tropical produce could be grown.

CHAPTER III

HISTORY has it that Chachapoyas was founded in 1536 ; it certainly looks it, judging from the archaic structures which line the narrow streets. Its name signifies "the abode of strong men," but evidently the valiant gentlemen who were responsible for its origination did not expend much of their strength in building themselves a city equal to their prowess.

The idea of the place is quite good, that is to say, so far as the location and general plan are concerned, but there it ends, as in execution it is very poor indeed, and can only be classed on a par with many other primitive towns of the interior, although slightly larger and more prosperous than the majority. It is no discredit to the place that it has seen better days ; one really wonders how it has stood the test of time at all, in view of its isolation and remoteness. The healthy climate which it enjoys is, no doubt, responsible for much, but it is enterprising men, such as Don Pablo Pizarro and a few others whom I met, that have held the place together, and will one day make it a really great city in every sense of the word. Should the transcontinental railway from Paita to the Marañon ever become an accomplished fact, a spur line up the Utcubamba valley

A MUCH TRAVELLED PIANO

would bring about a wonderful change, as, outside of agricultural interests, the district boasts of considerable mineral wealth, which is bound to lie dormant until adequate transportation facilities present themselves. The possibility of making a further connection with the town of Moyobamba is rather more difficult, but here again, if these two districts were given an opportunity of inter-changing produce, let alone ship it to the coast, they would become centres of great importance, and be able to support an enormous population.

Don Pablo's skill at overcoming obstacles was forcibly brought home to me by the presence of a fine Broadwood piano in his house. I gazed at its massive frame and then reflected on my experiences of the past few days, and the difficulties I had encountered in transporting my small cargo. I was informed that this inert mass of wood and metal had been carried all the way from the coast fifteen years ago. Good mules can make the journey from Cajamarca to Chachapoyas in eight days ; I had taken fourteen ; the piano had taken three months and was apparently none the worse for wear.

Amongst others who showed me considerable courtesy during my stay were his Reverence Don Emilio Lisson, Bishop of Chachapoyas, now Archbishop of Lima ; also Sr. Thomas Mesia, a progressive merchant of unusual foresight and energy. It was thanks to his efforts that I was able to find accommodation for developing the many photos which I had taken to date. The bishop was well known all over Peru for his kind works, but it is only a few like myself who were

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

able to appreciate the practical turn which he never lost sight of in the exercise of his multitudinous duties. Outside of the schools which stand to his credit, he had installed a small electric plant at the college, together with a number of electric lights in the plaza and main streets. Unfortunately, after everything was in working order, the municipality would not provide coal for the boiler; thus a very praiseworthy effort was allowed to lapse through lack of local support, and not through lack of coal, which is found in abundance not very far away.

The day after my arrival I sent my boy back along the trail we had come by in quest of the little mule, which had been left to rest near a native hut. About three in the afternoon I saw him coming into town, head down, ears back, and with slow, halting steps, just like a worn-out old man. It was with some sense of satisfaction that I watched him come up the street, and realised that all my animals and baggage had now arrived safely. It was nothing to be proud of, as the stories current concerning the next leg of my journey to Moyobamba were enough to make me turn round and head for the coast once more. Still, it was a good omen for the future.

It was very evident that with the exception of my own saddle-mule, none of the others would be of any use without a very long period of idleness. To purchase new animals looked rather impossible; besides, the prices asked were ridiculous. In the end I reluctantly sold the animals which had served me so well, and arranged with a man named Mesa to transport my cargo for me, providing

A TYPICAL START

me also with a boy who could act as general assistant.

The day of my departure started in typical Peruvian fashion—no boys, no mules, and no *arriero*. Six o'clock was the usual hour for me to set out, but Mesa arrived at ten o'clock to inform me that everything would be ready by ten-thirty. So far as time was concerned he was correct, but the men were not those I had contracted for. They were to have been the same fellows who had relieved me of my two cargoes on the way from Cajamarca. The excuse given was that one of them was to go on a journey with Don Pablo the next morning, and the other had a bad foot and could not possibly move. I realised that some plot had been formed to defeat me of my wishes, so I called the deal off. In ten minutes' time the boy whose foot was so bad that he could not move came into the *patio* hale and hearty, and somewhat out of breath as a result of having run most of the way to the house. As I had supposed, he was not ill at all ; it was simply a put-up scheme on the part of Mesa to give me inferior men.

This class of Peruvian is a curse to the country, profound liars, and glad to cheat you out of your last penny if they get a chance. There is a saying in the country that it is lawful to kill a Chinaman or rob a *gringo* ; I know little of their attitude towards the former, but there is a certain type who never fail to rob a *gringo* whenever possible.

By noon we were actual'y on the move, but the hour was too late to allow of our reaching Molinopampa that day, and I had to content myself with a little place off the main trail called Daguas,

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the home of my boy, Manuel Montoya. The dwelling in which he and his family lived was very quaint, what with its heavily thatched roof and thick adobe walls, primitive in the extreme, but a sound shelter from the heavy rains that fell during the night. Men, women, and children, nine in all, including myself, occupied the same room, sleeping on the usual adobe benches raised at one end to form a pillow, and built in as part of the structure which constituted the house. Our evening meal, consisting of corn, potatoes, and some delicacies from my own larder was served in a dark, smoke-begrimed room, in the centre of which a fire smouldered on the earthen floor. The smaller and less offensive pigs, aided by the more enterprising fowls, made periodic raids upon our food supply, and had to be driven off continuously, as otherwise there would have been nothing left for ourselves.

In view of the arduous journey that was to come, I had provided the party with an ample supply of food. There would be no chance of buying any *en route* from the few half-caste settlers whom we would encounter, as these people have all they can do to provide sufficient for themselves, let alone cater to passing strangers. Thanks to the generosity of the Señora Pizarro there was no chance of my running short; she had even taken the trouble to prepare some guava jelly and cheese—luxuries which a mere man would never have thought of.

An erroneous impression exists in the minds of many that food, in the form of luscious fruits, is found by the wayside, and all the weary traveller

OVER-RIPE FRUIT

has to do is to dismount and satisfy himself from the abundance which Nature provides ; this is far from the case, as there is only one that grows wild, and that is the chirimoya, of which we had seen thousands of trees since leaving Leimebamba. Alas! the fruit never matures on the tree, and has to be picked and kept for six or seven days before it is fit to eat. On a previous journey in the Marañon valley I had done this with unpleasant consequences, so that the large green chirimoyas which I now saw, dangling at arm's length, did not have the same tantalising effect they might have had otherwise. I recall the incident very clearly ; it was one of those witheringly hot days, nothing had passed my lips since early morning, and in my parched-up state I decided to make a meal off several juicy chirimoyas stowed away in my saddle-bags. They were over-ripe, but I devoured them greedily nevertheless, with the inevitable result that the excessive heat produced fermentation internally, and in a short time my intoxication was so complete I could barely keep astride my mule's back.

Ever since we had left Chachapoyas, Montoya had made repeated efforts to broach some subject that was on his mind. I had a good idea what it was, and thought that the best policy was to let him screw up sufficient moral courage to speak without any assistance from me. It came out in the end as I had expected. " Would the *señor* be so kind as to let him go back to get the sick mule I had given him and which he had left in pasture at Leimebamba ; his other brother, Carmen, knew the trail to Moyobamba better than he did

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himself, and would be glad to go in his place." Personally, it was quite immaterial to me which went, so long as I had a true settlement of the case and not some absurd excuse, such as being confined to bed and unable to move. The matter settled, both brothers rode with me to Molinopampa next day, where it had been arranged that new mules would be provided.

We were only three hours in the saddle, and if everything had been ready we could have gone on to Ventilla, five hours beyond ; but no, the *gobenador*, a bare-footed *cholo*, said it would take at least three hours to bring in the new animals from the *pampa* ; therefore it would be better to wait until the morrow, when I could leave at whatever hour I liked to name. My choice was six o'clock as usual, but, being interpreted into the Peruvian tongue, this meant anywhere from nine to twelve. The usual excuses, such as I now knew by heart, were forthcoming, but what stirred my indignation more than anything else was that I had paid the rogue Mesa a special price for exceptionally strong animals, and now I was confronted with three small mountain ponies belonging to the *gobenador* himself, who subsequently disclosed the information that he received forty-two *soles* for the trip, whereas I had paid Mesa a hundred and ten *soles*. It also transpired that these animals were all close at hand when I arrived, and were not, as I was told, many leagues away on the *pampa*.

The facts of the case were that the *gobenador* knew full well that if the animals had shown up I would have refused them, gone back to



CHACHAPOYAS.

BITTEN BY GARAPATAS

Chachapoyas and complained to the prefect, whereas by putting me off a day the mules I had come by had returned, and there was nothing left to do but go ahead with whatever was provided. I was disgusted with the whole business. I did not expect animals to fly, but I preferred to travel faster than a well-regulated funeral, even over bad trails; it was with this in view that each cargo had been reduced to 80 lb., so as to make it easier for the mules, and now this rascally half-breed had defeated my ends, incidentally benefiting himself and not the unfortunate pack animals.

The disagreeable impressions made on me during my stay in Molinopampa were not confined to *arrieros* either. For the first time in my life I was introduced to an insect called the *garapata*. On awaking in the morning my body was covered with the most ghastly looking blotches, blue, black, and yellow, which might well have been the plague, and caused me some alarm until the true cause was explained to me. The bite is not painful, and if not rubbed it does not become inflamed, the colour dissolving out in much the same manner as a bruise in about a week's time.

Although July, a great deal of rain had fallen in the last few days and our progress was made doubly difficult on that account. In the rainy season the trail is considered almost impassable and I certainly would not care to attempt it. The greatest obstacle which it presents is the Jalca, or pass known as Piscahuanuma, not quite as high as Calle Calle, but feared by the natives to a much greater extent on account of the time taken to make the crossing. Calle Calle is a rapid ascent

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straight up to the highest point of the divide, followed by an equally rapid descent on the other side, but Piscahuanuma straddles a double ridge whose two extremities are known as Ventilla and Puca Ladrillo, the ascent to the former taking two hours, and the descent from the latter to Bagazan another two hours. To these four hours of arduous toil must be added three more of undiluted misery over the bleak *puna* lying between the two ridges, exposed to the full force of the blinding snow-storms which frequently envelop the high altitudes.

The name Piscahuanuma, although applied chiefly to the pass as a whole, is really the name given to but a single point about half-way between the two ridges, and means in the Quechua language "where even the birds die." The trail, strewn with bones, shows that it fully deserves its evil reputation; it is the last resting-place of many, not only mules and beasts of burden, but also human beings coming from Moyobamba and the low river country where cold weather is unknown.

At the foot of the climb leading up to Ventilla my party rested in a shelter for the night. The temperature was on a par with Pomococha, cold and frosty. Our numbers were increased by the arrival of two boys carrying packs and on their way to Moyobamba; they attached themselves to us, evidently glad to have company on the way. It was not to be wondered at, as travelling alone through these desolate wilds, appalling in their solitude, is depressing to a degree. One of the new arrivals, Ramon by name, a well-set-up man of about twenty-eight years of age, proved very

“ WHERE EVEN THE BIRDS DIE ”

useful, and subsequently I engaged him to continue with me as far as Yurimaguas. He made himself very useful while crossing the *Jalca*, showing a desire to help me which was quite unusual in the ordinary native.

It was a weary climb to the summit of Ventilla, our path being nothing more nor less than a rough staircase cut in the sandstone. On the *puna* we even had clear weather for a short time, but the lake of Cochacongá, which lay placidly to the southward, soon became blurred over with a snow flurry, and from bright sunshine we were quickly plunged into the gloom of an arctic night. By the time we had fought our way to the crest of the last ridge the worst of the storm had passed over, and we started the descent to Bagazan under better auspices. Steps cut in the mountain side are of course, common throughout the *Sierra*, but here there were drops of three or four feet, down which men and beasts had to leap; to further add to the difficulty, there was a great amount of yellow mud, and the country rock, which up to the present time had usually consisted of sandstone or coarse granite, changed to a talcose slate of such a greasy texture that the animals could barely keep on their feet. At the foot of the worst section we literally slid into the valley of the Uquihua, a sea of black mud, through the centre of which a river of the same name flowed noisily but quite invisible to the eye, since it followed a subterranean passage beneath a lot of clean boulders.

It was typical of the contrariness of this moisture-soaked country that the driest spot to be found

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was the centre of the so-called river bed, a pile of clean, water-worn rocks, most convenient for those who were walking, but useless to the luckless mules, which had to flounder through the mud on either side as best they could.

Our destination, Bagazan, like most places with big names, proved to be a ruined hut on the verge of the timber line, with but half a roof and only two serviceable walls left standing. It needed an hour's hard work to complete the necessary repairs, but it was worth the labour we expended, as, long before night had come on, the rain and sleet had again descended upon us, and continued to drench the landscape well into the early hours of the morning.

It would be difficult to describe the progress we made during the next few days as a result. The thin, invisible thread called a trail taxed the powers of endurance of every member of the party. During my many journeys in Peru I have seen some bad trails, but I cannot recall any quite the equal of that lying between Ventilla and Rio Seco. It represented all the evils known to trail users: rocky ledges, overhanging trees, abrupt drops, sharp inclines, and fallen tree-trunks; sometimes, also there were narrow defiles twenty or thirty feet deep, worn out of the sandstone by action of water, and so narrow that a mule with an overhanging cargo could barely get through; then again there were mud-holes so bad that we had to stop, cut down a tree or two, and make an improvised corduroy road so as to get the animals across in safety. I found it easier and more pleasant to go on foot, and I do not suppose that

GETTING WARMER

in the whole trip from Chachapoyas to Moyobamba I covered more than twenty-five per cent of the distance mounted.

There was one thing alone to compensate for the hardships : it was getting warmer—each day brought a marked difference in temperature, and the interest of our surroundings increased by leaps and bounds. The trees were no longer ugly and stunted as at the higher altitude, but exquisitely beautiful, their long slender trunks rising out of a dense undergrowth of ferns ; myriads of small and gorgeously coloured butterflies rose in clouds at our feet, and occasionally the iridescent blue sheen of some large morpho would flash overhead like lightning in the sky of a summer's evening. The great silence of the mountain tops was dissipated, not suddenly, but little by little new sounds came to my ears, insects, birds, and animals all doing their share.

Even the River Uquihua took on some semblance of life ; keeping due east, with an occasional inclination to the north, we crossed it repeatedly, stepping from one rock to another so as to secure a dry passage. Only in one place was there any pretence of a bridge, and, curiously enough, at this point the river preferred some subterranean passage, and but for the clean state of the boulders lying round there was nothing to indicate its presence.

Almirante, Uchco, Puca Tambo, were soon left behind, then we bid temporary farewell to our uncertain friend the river, and headed due north up a slope to Ventana, where a rare treat awaited me in the form of a magnificent view

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across the Mayo valley. This was a real valley, and not a narrow slit like that of the Marañon. Barely visible in the distance was the very last ridge which lay between me and the great Amazon forests, that magic spot which was luring me on to probe the mysteries which lay hidden in its leafy depths.

About 2,000 feet below from where I stood a few clearings were visible, known as Rio Seco, which, as its name implied, boasted of a dry river, but it was quite in keeping with the peculiarities of the country to find it foaming with water when I reached its banks.

Carmen had a friend who lived in one of the huts nearby; he was a half-caste settler, whose chief occupation in life was growing sugar-cane and collecting *bombanaje*, the young palm leaves from which panama hats are made. He appeared to be very friendly, so I made the usual formal inquiries as to the health of the *señora*, the children, and the conditions of the neighbourhood in general. "It is very quiet here, *señor*," he replied. "We seldom see anyone, and life is *muy triste*"—that is to say, very sad. I suggested that we liven things up a little, and prepare a sumptuous banquet of *pollo con arroz* in celebration of the occasion, I providing the rice if he would provide the chicken. Rice was a luxury these people seldom tasted, so my offer met with prompt approval and a general scramble ensued to catch one of the many scrawny fowls which ran loose about the habitation. The evening went off in great style; there was plenty to eat for every one, and a *menu* that even the Ritz could not equal, consisting of Yuca soup, eggs, chicken and rice, baked bananas,

THE MAGNIFICENT FOREST

guava jelly, cheese, coffee, and liqueur in the shape of native rum made locally.

It was the first night spent in a really warm atmosphere since the day we left Balsas, and instead of all huddling up by a fire, we distributed ourselves out in the open, chatted on topics of interest till, with a wholesome tired feeling, the result of many days' hard work, we stretched ourselves out to enjoy a luxurious sleep. All hands were in fine fettle next day as a result, and we set out on our march to Moyobamba with renewed vigour, greatly refreshed in mind and body.

Two or three miles beyond we crossed the Rio Negro, between which and the Rio Seco there is some of the most magnificent forest scenery found anywhere. The scanty underbrush enabled me to enjoy an undisturbed view of the trees, which were of tremendous size, some distorted into fantastic shapes, others as straight as a die, and of great girth. A solemn and peaceful stillness brooded over the forest, occasionally broken by the chatter of a wandering family of monkeys, or else the hoarse screech of some strange bird hidden in the branches overhead. The usual feeling of gloom which prevails round the roots of the forest world was completely dissipated by bright shafts of sunlight which found their way through occasional openings in the tree tops. Periodic open glades, bathed in sunshine, further relieved any tendency towards monotony.

A mile or so after crossing the Rio Negro we emerged on a dry sandy stretch, covered with tall bracken and an occasional isolated clump of palm trees; this was an unexpected change, but

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fascinating for all that ; everything was dry and brittle, with no signs of water till we encountered a small patch of forest, in the centre of which was Tambo Yaco (water shelter), one of those entrancing spots of which we often read, but seldom see.

Imagine an abundance of tropical vegetation ablaze with coloured flowers surrounding an open glen, in the centre of which stood a little bamboo shelter ; to one side a brook flowed carelessly, and over its sparkling waters millions of butterflies flitted, others on the banks were enjoying a sun-bath with wings wide open, exposing vivid and startling colours, others much larger floated leisurely about in the heat, occasionally coming to rest on some leaf, at the same time opening and closing their wings slowly, as if to call attention to their brilliant sheen, the most intense iridescent blue imaginable.

I dismounted and spent some time drinking in the wonders about me, as I fully realised that it was one of those sights which would remain with me always, and the future enjoyment I would derive from thinking about it would be in proportion to the strength of the details squeezed into my mind's eye during the brief time the picture was before me. Maybe I saw it under ideal conditions, but the fact remains—I have never seen a spot to equal it since.

The last member of our party passed by, and I reluctantly rode on, my mind dwelling on the beauties of the enchanting spot we had just left. In a short time the dry, bracken-covered plain was again the dominating note of the landscape, but more green trees in the distance proclaimed



A YOUNG CITIZEN OF LEINEBAMBA.



TYPICAL CHOLO FROM CHACHAPOYAS.

RIOJA

the presence of still another brook or river. It turned out to be the River Uquihua, our old friend, no longer the irresponsible child such as we knew at Bagazan and Almirante, flowing here, there, and everywhere, but a mature, grown-up river, moving in stately fashion between well-defined banks fringed with foliage.

A short distance beyond habitations became plentiful, and then the village of Rioja came into view—a small, straggling little place, on a sandy knoll bedecked with banana trees. Much as I would have liked to, we did not stop very long to breathe the air of peace and contentment which reigned over this small town, well known even in the heart of Brazil for the superfine panama hats which it produces. Every one was anxious to reach the end of the journey, and the better progress we made now, the less work there would be for to-morrow. We had had two days of gloriously fine weather, which had dried up the trail, and although muddy sections were frequent, they were not as bad as they might have been.

Within half an hour we were at the banks of the Rio Tonchima, which at all seasons of the year is too deep to be forded; the packs had to be ferried across in a canoe, while the animals, only too pleased to have a cold bath, swam. My men were particularly glad when we pitched camp two hours later at a spot called Galdin. For some reason or another which I could not fathom Sunday, July 7th, was an unlucky day to travel on, and, according to them, it was a miracle some evil had not befallen us on the way.

Our last day's ride proved uneventful; for

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once every one was awake at five, and I did not have to rouse them from the lethargy usually displayed in the early hours of the morning. The country remained flat and open, with tall jungle growth instead of trees; towards the village of Calzada the vegetation became less and less, the thin sandy soil being unable to support anything more than an occasional shrub here and there, along with a certain amount of grass, upon which numerous cattle grazed. The most noticeable feature of the landscape was a large dome-like mountain known as El Morro, which rose out of the flat valley alongside the River Indoché; it could be seen for miles away, and is a landmark of considerable prominence. The Indoché is a narrow but deep stream which had to be crossed in canoes, a process that occupied one hour.

I was surprised that the town of Moyobamba was still invisible, as Carmen had given me to understand that it was barely three miles distant. Curiously enough, it remained completely obscured from view until we were within a hundred yards of its outskirts. An hour after leaving the Indoché we struck a sandy stretch, over which a small stream wriggled. We followed it for some distance, and then turning up a narrow ravine found ourselves suddenly at the very edge of the town.

Thanks to my friends in Chachapoyas, I had a letter of introduction to the sub-prefect, Don Esteban Hidalgo, so my party was hospitably received at his house. After the long and tiresome journey we had experienced, it was a pleasure to retire to rest without any thoughts as to the possible evils we would encounter the next day in our travels.

CHAPTER IV

MOYOBAMBA is frequently spoken of as the garden spot of the Peruvian Orient, or Montaña, the local name given to that vast expanse of country lying to the eastward of the Andes, which is clothed in a mantle of tropical vegetation, sparsely populated, and in many places not even explored. The term is indiscriminately applied to any section of this country, irrespective of whether it is high up on the eastern slope of the great Andean chain, where the forests begin, or away down in the low-lying Amazon basin, where the same forests continue to stretch in an unbroken sea of green several thousands of miles to the Atlantic seaboard.

Heavy rainfall and high temperatures are usually associated with the name, but there are many districts within its borders which enjoy a very decided dry season, and others, such as Bagazan, where forests are of frequent occurrence ; in fact, local variations in climate are just as pronounced in the Montaña as in the Sierra, the variations in either case being the direct result of differences in elevation above sea level.

The superficial area of the Montaña is considerably greater than that of the Sierra, but it would be difficult to say which of these two immense zones, differing so widely from each other in every

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characteristic, could be considered the greatest asset to the country as a whole. The warmth and great fertility of the Montaña undoubtedly appeals very forcibly to the average individual ; at the same time the rich veins of precious metals in the grim mountain tops make an equally strong appeal to others. Both hold out great inducements which tempt the avariciousness of man, but they are of a relative kind only, as the difficulties encountered in robbing Nature of her bounty are usually out of all proportion to the benefits gained.

In either case it will need years of patience and skill on the part of the Government before any comprehensive scheme of development on a large scale would pay, especially in the region of woods, which is so much more inaccessible from the present centres of civilisation on the coast. The Montaña has one great advantage over the Sierra, in that its agricultural wealth can, at any rate, provide food for a population of many millions, whereas the higher altitude must for ever remain unproductive in comparison.

Peruvians are extremely proud of their country's natural resources, and very rightly, too, but their unbridled enthusiasm frequently results in reports of a grossly exaggerated nature being spread abroad, which in the end react most unfavourably in their own interest. The many and fantastic stories current concerning the fabulous wealth of the Montaña even eclipses the wild statement made about the great mineral deposits of the Sierra. According to the natives, this more remote section of Peru is an El Dorado teeming with riches

THINKING OF THE FUTURE

of every kind and description, which only need to be gathered and carted away wholesale. If this is so, one naturally asks why all those who now live in poverty on the coast do not emigrate eastward without delay, but no satisfactory answer is ever forthcoming to this query.

I often think of the reply given by a prominent Peruvian when asked why it was his fellow-countrymen did not develop the coal deposits of the Andes ; it was to the effect that if they did there would be nothing left for their grandchildren to do. The same line of reasoning may possibly be applied to the conquest of the Peruvian Orient, and in the interest of the great-great-grandchildren that are to come this very important work may be postponed for several centuries.

The fact remains that to-day very little is done to consider the wants of this particular section of the country, and some parts of it, which, in the days of the Spaniards, had been put in touch with the outside world, have since reverted to savagery of a very vicious nature. If the time spent in talking about the Montaña were put to more practical use by the authorities, there is little doubt but that tangible results would quickly follow.

Conversation with many of the more energetic settlers met during my travels threw some interesting sidelights on the future of the Montaña, and indicated which way the wind was blowing. I would not be surprised if, by the time the Government begin to take even a casual interest, there might be no Montaña to take an interest in, as the chances of this section of Peru breaking away from the mother country and transferring

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

its allegiance to Brazil, to which geographically it belongs, or else setting up an independent Republic on its own account, are not at all improbable.

In Moyobamba, Yurimaguas, and other places my presence aroused considerable suspicion in the minds of the local officials, as no sound reason for my visiting such remote parts could be formulated, except on the supposition that I came as a secret agent from the authorities in Lima to spy out the land. I noticed that when the real objects of my journey were made known, there was a decided change of attitude on the part of many. Their friendliness was sincere, of that I am sure, and very much appreciated on my part, as to have a complete stranger thrust amongst them could not have been much of a pleasure, especially as my knowledge of their language was so very limited.

My welcome to Moyobamba left nothing to be desired; the worthy sub-prefect, with whom I spent many agreeable days, was extremely affable, although not overflowing with wit or bursting with brains. He planned a number of excursions for my edification, and materially assisted in the multitudinous preliminary details incidental to the arduous journey which still lay ahead of me. He lived in what looked like a very pretentious house when viewed from the street, but the rear premises had a somewhat vacant and disappointed look, just as if the builder had lost all ambition in his work before it was fully completed.

Meals were served in the rear on an open porch, shaded from the glare of the sun by many large banana trees that flourished in the back yard. The

INQUISITIVE VISITORS

food was simplicity itself, mostly vegetables ; meat was scarce, and bread, of course, was a thing I had not seen for weeks. In the mountains roasted corn or *cancha* is the usual substitute, but here boiled plantains took its place. My sleeping quarters were as simple as the food we fed on ; a small, cool room, without windows, and but a single door leading out on to the street ; after the balmy air of the forests it was like being cooped up in a dungeon, but it had this great advantage, that I could work away in my cell at leisure and not be interrupted, except for the silent gaze of passers-by, who viewed me and my belongings with unfeigned astonishment.

During the day the top half of my door had to be left open, so as to allow a little light and fresh air to filter in through the narrow opening. The natives walking along the street were tempted by curiosity, and, having nothing of a very pressing nature on hand, enjoyed looking in at the *gringo* and the curious machines he had with him. Some less bashful tried to enter into conversation, asking where I had come from and whither bound, also what I had to sell. My replies were not calculated to be encouraging ; at the same time I did not like to express my sentiments too plainly. It was hard to reconcile myself to the fact that customs differed all the world over, and what English people might consider the height of rudeness was in this part of the globe simply an expression of friendly feeling and interest at which I should have been flattered.

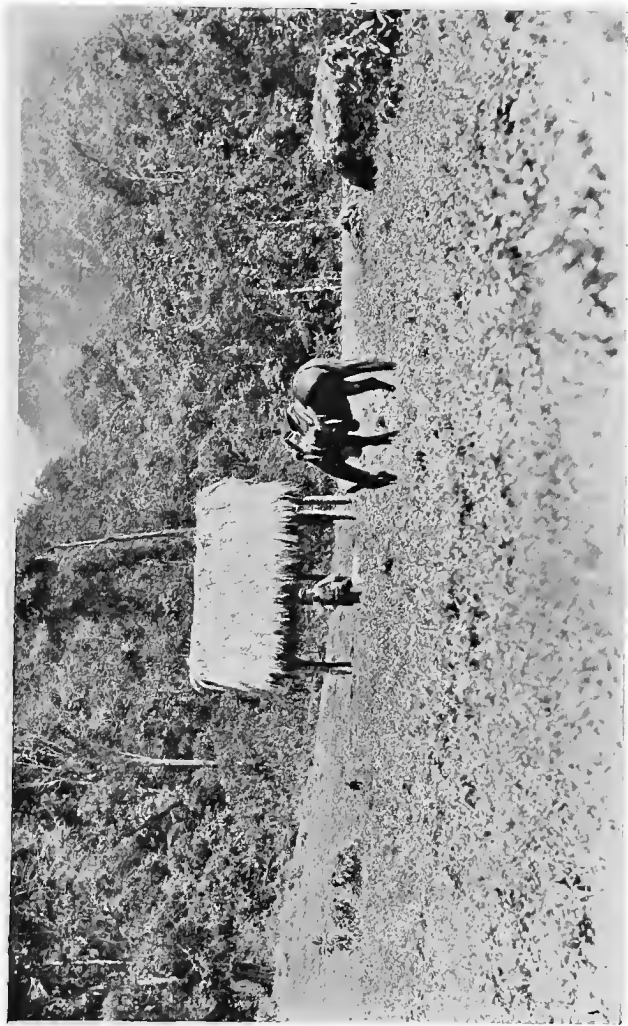
At the first opportunity I made a tour of the town to see the sights of interest, of which I felt

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

sure there were many. Starting with the plaza, the ugliest and most unkempt one I had ever seen, I strolled up and down the many sandy streets, all quite clean in spite of the fact that they were used as the receptacle for refuse thrown from the houses ; the scavenging was done very thoroughly by pigs, of which there were dozens running loose everywhere. The houses were decidedly picturesque, with their quaint balconies, some spotlessly white and tidy, surrounded with banana trees and other vegetation, which set them off to good advantage.

Fortunately there was enough rain at all seasons to support a certain amount of vegetable growth, as the town was built on a sandstone knoll void of any other water supply. Every drop for domestic purposes had to be brought in either by donkeys or else by the women, who usually carried large earthenware pots on their heads. The result of this practice showed itself in their carriage, which was habitually erect and graceful, very different from what I had seen in other parts. These dusky maidens were not lacking in good looks either, and I was told that they enjoyed a wide reputation in this respect ; certainly, some of those I saw had nothing to be ashamed of.

During my first day's wanderings in the town I was accosted by a tall man, who introduced himself as Carlos Cruz. He spoke excellent English, and begged me to come into his house for a chat. I gratefully accepted the invitation, and was ushered into a neat dwelling, at the back of which was a well-arranged garden. Seated under the shade of some large trees, we talked



ALMIRANTE ON THE TRAIL TO MOYOBAMBA

at length on many subjects of mutual interest. Conversation disclosed the fact that he was a Portuguese of good family, had travelled extensively, knew all Europe well, and had spent the last thirty-nine years of his life in Moyobamba. Amongst sundry documents in his possession he produced a letter signed by Lieut. Lister, R.N.R. and dated 1879, enquiring if I knew the writer. It was rather like asking me if I was on speaking terms with Noah, but I felt flattered to think I looked so aged, and said I had not the pleasure.

It was not the only occasion upon which Don Carlos and myself met; we soon became good friends, and I found him a delightful companion, a veritable encyclopædia of information. There was hardly a subject upon which I wanted information but on what he could not enlighten me. My curiosity prompted me to ask why, of all the many places in the world, he had hit upon this particular spot so far off the beaten track. He told me that he had been satiated with the artificial existence found in the capitals of Europe, and had gone to the Amazon to seek the simple life. He had strayed further and further afield in his hunt for an ideal spot to settle down in, till at last, in the foothills of the Andes, he had stumbled across Moyobamba, which in those days was an earthly paradise, with all the earmarks of a prosperous future ahead of it. Coffee and panama hats had made it famous in the past, coffee and panama hats would sustain its greatness in the future. He had settled down, opened a trading establishment, and for many years business flourished.

Then came the rubber boom, when excitement

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

ran high, and the prospects of amassing fortunes easily caused hundreds of men to leave their homes and the coffee estates which they had planted with so much care, to go and hunt for the black gold in the unhealthy swamps of the Amazon. Year after year went by, but the husbands and brothers never came back; others followed in their footsteps, but the forest swallowed them up also. As a last resource, their womenfolk migrated to the river country in search of their loved ones, with no better success; fever and sickness ran riot amongst them, and the few survivors, broken in spirit and unable to face the hardships of the return journey, remained where they were, to start life afresh as best they could.

The population of Moyobamba was reduced from 12,000 to roughly 5,000 people within a comparatively short time; the coffee market was lost, other places started the manufacture of panama hats, and then the final blow fell when the collection of rubber ceased to pay. Forty per cent of the houses in the town to-day are abandoned, and the coffee which matures on most of the estates is allowed to rot on the trees. Had it not been for the ease with which foodstuffs are grown the rest of the population would have passed into oblivion also.

Carlos Cruz had backed the wrong horse; the misfortunes of the community reacted on his own business, which had started so successfully; financially, he went down-hill, and found himself unable to get away or bring capital to his assistance. A ray of hope appeared on his horizon when the Government offered a substantial bounty to anyone

A REAL OPTIMIST

who was successful in producing silk. With his remaining spare cash he imported eggs and mulberry trees from different parts of the world, and after several years of careful work shipped a large consignment of silk to Lima. Not only did he never get the bounty offered, but he even failed to get a single reply to the many letters he wrote to the authorities on the subject.

Since he was too old to pull up stakes and start afresh, I wondered that he was not rather embittered as a result of his experiences, but not at all; his cheery disposition was quite infectious, and although what he thought of Government officials would not bear putting in print, he was quite happy to make the best of life as it stood. "After all," he said, "conditions in Europe, as a result of the war, are probably worse than they are here, where at any rate there is no food shortage."

In this last remark he was certainly right. The valley of the Rio Mayo, of which Moyobamba is the chief settlement, is the most fertile and productive of any district in the Montaña which it has been my good fortune to visit. The ground is not flat and boggy, like much of the Amazon country, but just sufficiently inclined to give good drainage. There is a distinct dry season, and enormous areas of land are available for cultivation. The elevation, being about 3,000 feet, ensures a warm but healthy climate, in which a great variety of produce can be grown.

Let me enumerate some of the things which Don Carlos had under cultivation in his own garden—carrots, cauliflowers, cabbages, string

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

beans, bananas, grapes, pineapples, oranges, tangerines, mulberries, tobacco, cucumbers, lettuce, coffee, tomatoes, sugar-cane—incidentally, he made his own wine and chocolate, excellent bread from banana flour, and a great assortment of jams.

Pigs and chickens seemed to run wild and get fat with the minimum amount of care, and cattle flourished in certain parts of the valley, near Calzada, for example, where there were several large herds. To enumerate all the natural products which thrived in the forests would fill a volume, but they varied from nuts suitable for the manufacture of household soap to vanilla beans of the most exquisite flavour. Valuable orchids and rare butterflies should also be mentioned, as with a little enterprise considerable business could be done with these.

My stay in Moyobamba was of longer duration than I expected, on account of the difficulty of getting cargo bearers to go on with me towards Yurimaguas. There were two routes available: one to the southward via Llamas and Tarapota, the other to the eastward to Cachipuerto; the former was the easiest, but considerably longer, so I chose the latter. It was with some relief that I heard mules could not proceed further on account of the tangle of forest growth which barred the way to the river country. My journey from Chachapoyas had taught me that there was no pleasure in forcing animals over ground that could be traversed to much better advantage on foot, so when it came to selling my equipment I was not as reluctant about it as I might have been. The mule brought £16, and the balance

HUNTING UP PORTERS

of the gear £3, not very high prices, but in the long run it was much cheaper than renting inferior animals, to say nothing of being much more agreeable.

Don Esteban made numerous efforts to get me good porters from some of the outlying settlements, but financial reward for their services was not much of an inducement to offer in this Garden of Eden, where they could get plenty to eat without having to make arduous journeys through the forests carrying heavy packs, which to them was not even amusing. The days slipped by without any definite settlement being arrived at, but they were not lost, as, armed with my camera, I found plenty of material of interest to record.

Amongst others whom I had the pleasure of meeting was Sr. Agustin Vasquez, a photographic enthusiast like myself, and with his able assistance I filmed the whole process of making panama hats, from the cutting of the young palm shoots in the forest to the finished product adorning the head of a local beauty. The primitive method of making *chancaca*, or brown sugar, made another interesting series; so when I got through I was well satisfied that my time had been spent to good advantage.

Don Agustin was the proud possessor of an old Pathé motion picture projector, and a dozen or so still more antique films. When business was a little slack and he needed a few shekels to keep the financial pot a-boiling, he would give a "movie" show in the market place. The price of admission varied: 20 cents for the benches, 10 cents if you brought your own seat, and 2½ cents for those

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

accommodated back of the screen, who either could not read, or did not mind such a trivial detail of having to read all the titles reversed as in a mirror. It was seven or eight years ago that he had brought his "movie" over from Europe, where he had gone to spend some of his surplus wealth accumulated during more prosperous times. Naturally the natives had seen his films on many occasions, but he was still able to draw an occasional crowd that more than covered his expenses. During my visit his supply of ready cash ran so low that it necessitated giving one of these performances in order to restore financial equilibrium. It was to be a gala night, and a huge placard was paraded round the town bearing the announcement that at the hour of 9 p.m., in the Market Place, a great performance of motion pictures would be celebrated. To add to the importance of the announcement the municipal band of four instruments was engaged to walk in front and make as much noise as possible.

When nine o'clock came round a fair audience had assembled to see the show, but there was still a great deal of room for those who wanted to stand or cared to bring their own chairs. At the main entrance the one solitary policeman of the town was on duty, holding in check hundreds of children who had collected with a hope of being able to slip in unobserved without paying. I recalled their bright, eager faces, and then thought of the vacant spaces that still remained within, so returning to the door I addressed the lonely official with the air of one in authority, saying. "Let every one inside."

MISTAKEN FOR A MILLIONAIRE

He looked at me, dumfounded in amazement ; surely I must be out of my mind. " But there are over three hundred children, *señor*," he said, looking at the ticket collector, who began figuring out how much that would amount to at 2½ cents a head. " No matter," I replied, " here are ten *soles* for the lot." Nothing more was to be said ; for once in my life I was mistaken for a millionaire ; the street was emptied, the ticket man and the policeman closed the doors on a full house, and the show began.

Don Agustin was all smiles at the reception his pictures received. " The way the audience cheered was just like old times," he said. It was like very old times for me, as never had I imagined that such ancient productions existed ; they must have been very old even when they were bought ; to the *cholo* kiddies that was a matter of no consequence ; they thought them wonderful, especially one of some elephants taken in India. Their prolonged shrieks of delight caused me more amusement than any " movie " show I have ever been to before or since.

I made a rough calculation that if much more of my time was spent in riotous living such as this it would be impossible to get back to the coast before the rainy season started, and it therefore behoved me to hasten my departure as much as practicable, especially if I seriously considered doing all I had set out to accomplish.

My greatest set-back so far, and one that caused me much disappointment, was the complete failure which attended every effort to develop my photographs locally. Sand in the water was

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

invariably a difficult factor to cope with, but in the Montaña the damp, moist air came as a new menace, and prevented the film from drying. Even after an alcohol bath small flies would adhere to its surface by the thousand before it had a chance to set properly. On one occasion a clean strip of celluloid was all that remained in the morning, as a result of an army of hungry ants having banqueted off the emulsion during the night. Many of the photos which had been taken could not possibly be duplicated, so that their complete loss was most disheartening, and I began to think that a pictorial record of my wanderings would never materialise.

It is, of course, well known that the taking of successful photographs in a tropical climate is by no means easy, but I kept a carefully written record of everything pertaining to the subject, no matter how trivial, and have since devised methods which ensure good pictures with a fair degree of certainty.

My last two days in Moyobamba were chiefly concerned with rearranging my cargo, preparatory to the journey through the forests to Balsapuerto. All baggage was cut down to a minimum, but the motion picture camera, tripod, and some 10,000 feet of "movie" film still resulted in my having more than double the amount that ordinarily would have been necessary.

On many occasions, both past and future, I had been sorely tempted to throw this cumbersome equipment away, so as to proceed more rapidly and with a greater degree of freedom, but somehow or another we never parted company till on the



SETTING OUT ON FOOT THROUGH THE FOREST.

DON ESTEBAN HANDLES THE CASH

return journey the hungry waters of a whirlpool near the mouth of the Nieva river swallowed up the bulk of it.

The difficulty of getting porters, and their disinclination to carry heavy loads, was very apparent. It brought home to me the crying need of some modern form of transport which would be necessary before the valley of the Mayo and all its agricultural wealth would be a national asset. The cost of shipping material to Pacasmayo, on the coast, is about £45 per ton on mule back, yet there are not enough men and animals in the entire countryside to move more than four tons a month at the very outside. The price I paid for five men and a small boy to carry my cargo of roughly 220 lb. was £6, and, according to the sub-prefect, custom said that payment was to be made in advance ; wisdom said let Don Esteban handle the cash, so the money was turned over to him to make the necessary disbursements, which I must say he did to my great satisfaction.

In addition to the porters, Ramon, the individual who had attached himself to my party on the way from Chachapoyas, was engaged to come with me to assist in the photographic work ; when we finally set out the party consisted of eight in all, carrying loads varying from 40 to 80 lb.

During the past week I had heard many sinister rumours concerning expeditions which had completely disappeared in these very woods I was now about to traverse ; both the " Mirko Selgan " and " Cromer Page " had set out with a view to exploring and mapping certain unknown sections, but the jungle had swallowed them up, and only

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

second-hand rumours concerning the evils which befell them were current. I felt that as the journey ahead of me was not of many days' duration, and that my men were good-natured fellows, unlikely to give trouble, providing their material wants were well looked after, there was nothing to be alarmed at. Therefore, I had no feelings of misgiving on leaving the town where I had spent so many enjoyable days, and proceeded to crawl through the damp and silent forests on my way to the Amazon.

CHAPTER V

UNDER the most favourable conditions possible it is a full four days' trek from Moyobamba to Balsapuerto, but anyone who contemplates taking the same route to Iquitos which I followed on this occasion would do well not to hurry over this particular section of the trail.

From Rio Seco to Yurimaguas there is more interest and pleasure to be found in one's surroundings than all the rest of the entire trans-continental route from Pacasmayo to Para put together. By day the sun is warm, but it has not had time to cultivate the disagreeable habit of radiating its heat in the oppressive manner typical of the Amazon, and even if it had it takes time to thaw out those chilly recollections of Piscahuanuma and Calle Calle ; until this is accomplished no temperature can be considered disagreeably high. At night the cool air ensures a complete absence of mosquitoes or any other noxious insects, so it is possible to sleep in comfort after the day's toil and start on the next with renewed enthusiasm.

Five days after leaving Don Esteban's hospitable roof I walked into Balsapuerto feeling abnormally vigorous, exhilarated beyond measure, and not the least fatigued after my prolonged scramble through the forest.

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

Had I known as much then as I do now, I should have lingered by the roadside a day or two longer to more fully assimilate the magic of the dawning tropics. It probably seems incredible to those whom circumstances keep in the crowded centres of Europe that there could be any real pleasure in travel of this kind ; to them such things are probably more interesting to read about than to experience, but the fact remains that to wander through trackless forests and camp on the banks of some unknown stream in the wilds has an alluring fascination for many, of whom I must admit being one.

When my little party had been ferried over the placid waters of the Rio Mayo, and in single file was threading its way towards the last ridge of hills which had to be crossed before emerging on the Amazon plains, I had no feelings of regret to think that I was turning my back on the last outpost of civilisation, and for a week or two would have to sleep out under the stars.

My cargo bearers were not too elated at the prospects—they were Indians who had just been entangled in the snare of civilisation, and this was too much like reverting to the old life ; for all that they were glad to accompany me in return for the large *machetes* or knives which Don Esteban had given them, and I think they cherished a secret joy at the thought of parading their prosperity before the eyes of their former friends whom we might meet on the road. It was a herculean task to get them out of the town more or less sober, but to my dismay I found each had a private supply of *aguardiente*, and our rate of procedure

CAMP IN THE FOREST

was so slow in consequence I decided to camp early at a small outlying *chacra*, so as to allow them to drink the lot and be done with it.

The idea proved a good one, as we left Yano Yacu (black water) the next morning in a less hilarious mood. For some hours we journeyed in silence through the forest, till at noon we reached an open stretch of grassy country splendid for cattle raising, where there was a small hut called Jesus-del-Monte. There was no occasion to stop, so we continued over the open ground, and then once more dived into the forest—on this occasion darker and more dense than any I had seen heretofore. In places there was a suggestion of a trail, but for the most part it was completely overgrown and invisible. Two hours slipping about in the mud and decaying vegetation brought us to the top of a ridge where a small shelter hove in sight, which the men called Baca-si-Prana. It was getting late, so we settled down for the night, and within a short time the blue smoke from our fire was floating in the evening air. Bananas and yucas were prepared as usual, along with a little rice and coffee, then a native cigarette as a final touch, and our day's work was done.

The moon rose late, and with it a gentle breeze, which set the whole forest trembling in its silvery rays. I woke about one o'clock, and for an hour or so watched the antics of two tiny monkeys overhead who had been attracted by curiosity to the spot. I was fascinated by the sight of them and the strange sounds about me, but sleep carried me off again, and the next thing I knew day was breaking and it was time to be on the move.

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

We made the divide in two and a half hours, but there was no view to speak of; the ridge continued to the north and south, but to the east a high spur blocked out any vista that might otherwise have been obtained. Our ascent had been gradual and by easy stages, but the descent to the open glade of Mapatambo, 2,000 feet below, was unusually abrupt. Here we encountered the Rio Mashu Yacu, upon whose waters we would eventually embark in canoe. We crossed over to the north bank, passing through some fine stretches of forest, our course more or less east, but frequently swinging round due north or due south for considerable distances at a time. Crossing back to the south shore of the river we followed up a small stream, Chucllu Yacu (corn river), and then once more taking to the tall timbers we struck uphill, coming to rest for the night near a small hut where some enterprising half-caste was trying to establish himself.

Now it happened that my boy was rather socially inclined, and whenever we met strangers in this way he was always very much to the front; for once he seemed disinclined to figure in the lime-light, and kept out of sight all evening. I wondered what was the cause of this sudden fit of bashfulness, but the puzzle was not solved until the moment of our departure next morning, when the settler's wife appeared in a frenzy of rage. Rushing up to Ramon she called him a scoundrel, a robber, and all the names she could think of in the expressive Spanish language, and claiming twenty-five cents, which she said he owed her for something bought in Moyobamba years ago.

A WOULD-BE SUICIDE

To clear the atmosphere, I handed over the amount in question, quite expecting the boy to look relieved and thankful, but not at all. As soon as the woman had departed, he burst into a flood of tears, exclaiming—"Give me your revolver, *señor*, give me your revolver!" "What for?" I ejaculated. "To kill myself, *señor*!" he wailed. "She called me a thief and a robber! I do not wish to live; I must kill myself." Needless to say, the tragedy did not take place, and we set out, a settled gloom hanging over the would-be suicide, till two hours' hard walking up to the crest of the ridge had effaced from his mind the unpleasant memories of the scene just enacted.

Our line of advance had once more changed from south to east, and we found ourselves travelling at right angles to a number of folds, which lay parallel to the main ridge passed over yesterday. In the bottom of each of these valleys, or *quebradas*, as they are called, was a small stream, the most important, as well as the most interesting, being Puma Yacu, a series of large pools of limpid green water chained together by a number of waterfalls. Heretofore the crossing of this stream had always been accomplished on foot, at the very edge of one of the highest cascades, and a very hazardous process it was, too—especially when a large volume of water was coming over. Although not deep, the current is swift, and the rock smooth and slippery as glass; the unfortunate individual who once lost his foothold never regained it again, and was swept over the edge and drowned in the pool fifty feet below. I found a flimsy

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

bridge had been built recently, and thus the task of crossing was rendered less perilous.

Beyond Puma Yacu we traversed more broken country, with slates and shales outcropping at periodic intervals. In these zones a marked increase in the forest growth was noticeable, both as regards size and density. One valley occurred directly in the slate, and the slope of its eastern side conformed to the angle at which the strata had been tilted up by the titanic forces of Nature. Upon its innumerable surface slides had taken place, which I attributed to tracks through the forest made by animals or Indians, which in time became worn and acted as channels for the surface water to collect in. This would gradually soak through to bedrock, loosening the sub-strata adjacent to the smooth surface of the slate, and then, with a great rush and a roar that could be heard for miles, everything would give way. Great monarchs of the forest, underbrush, and surface soil would all form one colossal avalanche that would go tearing down into the valley, carrying everything before it.

I had the good fortune to witness one of these taking place, on my return to the coast, and the spectacle was certainly unique. As our own trail followed round the top of many of them, it rather confirmed my theory as to their origin.

The switch-backing that we had been indulging in ever since early morning began to get a little monotonous. Ramon had assured me that we would reach a point early in the day where there was an uninterrupted view of the Amazon basin, and then it would be a steady down-grade all

THE GREATEST SIGHT ON EARTH

the way to Cachipuerto. The top of each ridge brought one disappointment after another, till it began to look as if Ramon were a liar as well as a "robber and a thief." Shortly after midday we were resting in the bottom of a *quebrada*, when my boy casually remarked that the next ridge was actually the very last one, and then our troubles would be over.

The thought of the view for which I had been thirsting so long being near at hand caused me to proceed on alone, leaving the men to follow when the spirit moved them. Full of excitement I scrambled up the slope, but, alas! the top of the ridge was rather flat, free of trees, yet covered with tall grass and dense scrub which effectively obscured everything from sight. My disappointment was of short duration—barely three hundred yards further on the tall grass suddenly ceased at the edge of a precipitous descent, and one of the most glorious spectacles it has ever been my good fortune to behold burst upon my astonished gaze.

The last ripples of the Andes seemed to suddenly die away several thousands of feet below me, and dissolve themselves into one mighty billowing ocean of tree tops, that extended without interruption as far as the eye could see. The Cachi Yacu river, which had been confined by the mountains to the straight and narrow path in its upper reaches, found itself free at last to meander about as it pleased, and in sheer delight went squirming off through the forest until completely lost in the haze of remoteness. The horizon was gigantic, and the thought that these forests persisted

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

without interruption right across Brazil to the very shores of the Atlantic was almost too fantastic to contemplate.

So engrossed was I with the immensity of the scene before me, that I failed to take note of my porters passing by ; believing that some had lagged behind, I sent Ramon back to hurry up the stragglers, but he returned to say that there were no signs of anyone. Visions of my precious cargo being jettisoned over a cliff or left in the woods floated through my mind ; such things had frequently been known to happen, and I realised the impossibility of ever recovering my possessions if such a catastrophe had occurred.

While these unpleasant thoughts were occupying my attention, I caught sight of two boys on a ledge 1,000 feet below ; I shouted out to them at the top of my lungs to wait, and hurried down, discovering to my intense relief the entire party safe and sound, wondering what all the rumpus was about. Naturally I never mentioned the cause of my anxiety, but it brought home to me the necessity for keeping a more careful eye on my cargo in the future.

The inclination is always to go rushing on ahead, and many cannot endure the tedious strain of travelling alongside the pack, no matter whether it is carried by mules or Indians. On long excursions better and more satisfactory progress can be made by bringing up the rear and assisting if an emergency arises. This was particularly true in my case, as cameras and photographic gear can be irreparably damaged through careless handling. Frequently I have seen an Indian wade

CRAWLING DOWN A CLIFF

through deep water with his load half submerged ; if he happened to be carrying clothing it was of no particular moment, but with films it would be disastrous. The average Indian can see no reason for keeping one load dry and not another ; all loads were the same to him, and a little trifle such as water was of no consequence.

The descent from Icuto (the name of the spot where I obtained such a magnificent view) was very sharp, but the drop which now confronted us was the worst declivity I had ever tackled anywhere ; it was a red sandstone cliff, about 400 feet high, down which we had to clamber. How the men, staggering under their big burdens, were ever able to keep on their feet was a mystery to me, especially one of them, who carried nearly 100 lb. The first portion of the descent was quite enjoyable, fairly open, dry, and had many tracks of jaguars, or some other large member of the cat tribe, in the sandy soil. Conditions changed rapidly, enormous drops of water splashed down from the clouded sky overhead, and before long a positive deluge set in. The ledge we were on became a waterfall, and the rain poured off every leaf and twig in a continual stream. It was quite a problem to keep dry, but with my waterproof sheet carefully wrapped round me I arrived at the bottom without being soaked to the skin, and quite pleased with myself as a result.

Within an hour the storm had blown over, and we were at the banks of a river known as the Escalera Yacu. Stepping from stone to stone, we crossed at once to the opposite shore, only to re-cross back again a few hundred yards further

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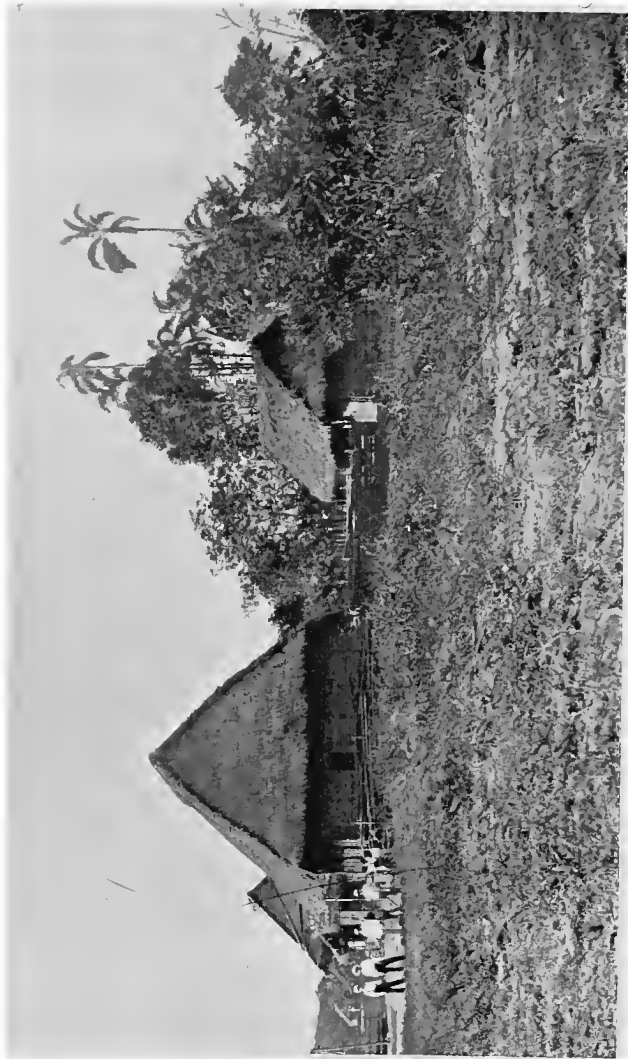
on. Ten minutes later we cut a large bend, and had to make a third crossing. This performance was repeated until we had actually traversed this miserable river nine times.

On each occasion the waters became wider and deeper, and the question of my getting across dry-shod became increasingly difficult. Short steps developed into strides, strides into jumps, and jumps into bounds, until I found myself leaping from rock to rock with an agility that surprised me. The leaps became longer and longer, till at the fifth crossing, unable to fly, I floundered into the seething mass of swirling waters in full flood as the result of the heavy rain.

I might have saved all the energy expended for a more useful purpose, as to try and keep dry in this part of the world is like trying to stop breathing ; it is part of one's existence that cannot be dispensed with.

The sun came out as if to apologise for the inconvenience the rain had caused us, but we were only aware of its presence when actually crossing the open spaces of the river ; in the woods it was positively dark, the rank undergrowth closed in upon us, and the larger trees spread their branches overhead, intent upon cutting off the last ray of light which might have helped dispel the gloom of our surroundings.

On joining up with the Cachi Yacu river we trudged along its south shore for a mile, sometimes over boulder-strewn banks, sometimes in the forest. There are some large deposits of salt in the neighbourhood, hence the reason for calling the river Salt Water. My boys collected a few chunks



SETTLEMENT OF BALSAPUERTO

CACHIPUERTO

to add to their already large loads, but we were now near to our destination for the night, and a few pounds more or less did not matter.

Cachipuerto, consisting of a lonely hut on the opposite shore, was occupied by a man and his wife, with a solitary child; after much shouting the man launched a canoe and came over to ferry us across to where he lived. It was not an unattractive spot—a large stretch of flat-bottom land, planted with yucas and bananas, and surrounded by high hills.

Our last day's tramp to Balsapuerto was uneventful; being only a matter of four and a half hours there was no need to leave early, and I took advantage of the opportunity to get some motion pictures of the men who had been my companions for the past few days. The operation over, we set out at 10 a.m. through the steaming forest, sultry and oppressive, without a suggestion of wind to freshen things up. It was appreciably hotter than anything we had encountered heretofore, and I shed every item of wearing apparel possible in my efforts to keep cool.

After two hours we reached the Rio Mullinges, a fine mountain torrent, sprinkled with huge boulders of grey granite. Had it been possible to cross without getting wet no one would have availed themselves of the opportunity. We forded it just above its confluence with the Cachi Yacu, and so alluring were the cool, sparkling waters that I spent a full twenty minutes swimming about in it, while the men were catching a good supply of fish a little further up-stream.

A couple of miles beyond there were a number

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

of Indian habitations hidden away in remote corners of the forest. I should never have suspected their existence but for the presence of tracks leading to them, and an occasional glimpse of some dark figure slipping off amongst the trees.

On arriving at our destination I went to the house of the most important member of the community, who styled himself the *gobenador*, whom I hoped would be able to assist me in many things, but it happened that the next day was to be a feast day of some sort or another, and the worthy official was busily engaged making himself a pair of white trousers to celebrate the occasion, so my hopes were in vain; the pair of trousers had to be completed before he could attend to anything else. Ramon started enquiries on his own account amongst the half-caste natives, and found one who had a bamboo structure called a house for rent at the colossal price of five cents a day. I paid a week in advance, and moved in without further ado.

When the cargo bearers deposited their burdens safe and sound I called them together and said how very satisfied I was with their behaviour on the trip, and in consequence would give each one an extra *sol*, by way of showing my appreciation. The announcement was received in stony silence, and they accepted the proffered reward without a word. Thinking that I had not been quite generous enough, I continued by saying that as their loads had been heavy and our progress excellent, I would give each man yet another silver *sol*. Even this did not produce any visible signs of pleasure, so, as I was anxious to have

CHARTERING A CANOE

them feel satisfied and contented, I tried another channel, this time telling them that not only would I reward them in silver, but they should also receive a large supply of food for the return journey. Again I failed to produce any signs of satisfaction, so in desperation I handed them out a drink all round from my private supply of rum, but I was disappointed even in this last hope. I looked from one to another, but each wore an expression of stolid indifference that was quite unfathomable. In despair I broke up the meeting, and retired to the privacy of my newly acquired residence.

They were, indeed, a strange lot of men to deal with ; I hardly expected thanks—that word is practically unknown—but I did hope to see a flicker of intelligence or some outward expression of pleasure. Even a dog wags his tail when he is pleased, but during the entire proceedings these fellows had remained as expressionless as logs of wood, and I have no doubt that if the truth were known they probably thought me quite mad for displaying such symptoms of generosity.

Not far from my abode lived a trader, Antonio Vasquez, whose advice I sought as to the best way of getting to Yurimaguas. There was a trail, he said, over which it was possible to travel on foot, but the river was preferable, since the journey was down-stream, and if I wished he would get some Indians with a canoe to transport Ramon and myself to our destination. The price mentioned was £5, but that naturally came down to £2 10s. before an agreement was arrived at. Subsequently I found that the Indians actually received the equivalent of four shillings

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

each in the way of merchandise from his store, the balance going to Vasquez for the hard work he had done.

There was no definite day set for our departure, as it would depend on the Indians and their inclination to travel; in the meantime I would have to indulge in a period of luxury and ease. Ramon seemed pleased at the prospects, as it gave him a chance of hobnobbing with his pals. I was not sorry either, as the whole atmosphere of Balsapuerto was so novel and interesting that there was no chance of getting bored.

It was a welcome change not to get up early in the morning and immediately set out on a long walk through the unknown. From this it should not be inferred that we lay in bed; far from it; life started with us as usual half an hour before sunrise, at the same time that other members of the community were setting out for their day's work in the outlying *chacras*, the name usually given to the small patches of ground cultivated by the natives. Between ten and two o'clock the heat was so intense that those who had remained in the settlement kept under cover as much as possible. Towards five the toilers would return, bringing with them yucas, bananas, and other foodstuffs collected during the day; then before darkness fell cattle and pigs would be rounded up in the plaza for the night, where they would be safe from the attacks of jaguars. By eight o'clock every one was asleep.

This was the usual routine that went on from day to day, year in, year out; occasionally a slight diversion would be caused by the death of some one,

A SEMI-DETACHED VILLA

or the arrival of a stranger like myself, who threw money about as if it were dirt ; but these were trivial events, and only caused a small flutter of excitement which was soon forgotten. It would take nothing short of an earthquake to make a lasting impression upon the inhabitants ; they were mostly full-blooded Indians, shy and not very far removed from their savage brethren who still roamed in the forests, the only apparent difference between them being that they wore trousers or skirts, as the case might be, and spoke a little Spanish. Between them and the *gobenador* there were, no doubt, many grades in the social scale, but to the uninitiated there was very little to choose, and it was no easy task to say where the savage ended and the civilised citizen began. Antonio Vasquez was the only exception, and he, of course, was in a class by himself.

The house I occupied was of a kind usually found in the Montaña. According to local standards it was a first-class residence, because the roof was strong and kept off the burning rays of the sun, or else the torrential rains that would frequently take place without a minute's warning. The two small rooms afforded no privacy whatsoever, as the walls were made of bamboo poles lashed horizontally to the uprights, which supported the roof ; the gaps between these were sometimes inches across, and were used promiscuously by anyone who wanted to look in. In the afternoon, when the camera had been put away, I would frequently be conscious of several pairs of eyes peering through one of the large cracks to see what the British lion was doing in his den. There

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

was a decided inclination on my part to throw things at my inquisitive observers, but I refrained, at the same time wondering if animals at the Zoo had the same sensation when spectators surrounded their cages. I was informed that these cracks were considered an advantage rather than otherwise, as they ensured a good circulation of air and plenty of light within the dwelling.

When building a house in the river country it is customary to pick the highest ground possible because it ensures good drainage and is less liable to be inundated during the flood season. Balsapuerto, although tucked away at the very foot of the Andes at an elevation of barely 750 feet above sea level, had managed to find a sandy bluff on which to rest some 60 feet above the Cachi Yacu river, just where it describes its first convulsion on the edge of the Amazon plains. At one time it was a prosperous trading-post, but, like so many others, has been depopulated of recent years, and allowed to run steadily down-hill. Little traffic passes by its doors, there is no commerce to amount to anything, there being few people to buy, and still fewer who have anything to sell. Were it not for its being the head of canoe navigation it would long since have been abandoned. The ground is fertile, produces abundantly, and although the heat of the day is intense a cool breeze invariably descends from the mountains at night to cool things off. I did not realise how hot it was until I made another attempt to develop some photographs. The bath was 72° at the start, but rose quickly to such a high temperature that the emulsion simply dissolved away,



AUTHOR'S HOUSE AT BALSAPUERTO

DIFFICULTIES OF GETTING PHOTOS

and by the time I had finished there was no picture left.

Taking photos of the natives was an equally difficult procedure—they could not have been more frightened had I mounted a machine-gun outside their dwelling. The moment I appeared armed with the camera the parents would herd their progeny inside like so many pigs, bar the door, and then look out through the cracks until I had gone away.

I found that one of the first outward signs shown by the average Indian of his willingness to assimilate the white man's idea of civilisation was his desire to be photographed ; this generally proved a better gauge of his development than the number of clothes he wore.

CHAPTER VI

BEFORE many days had elapsed the prospects of further adventures and experiences loomed up on the horizon.

Vasquez had secured a canoe to take me downstream to Yurimaguas, and I was to be ready to leave the following morning at eight. The announcement was received with unfeigned pleasure, not because I was anxious to leave Balsapuerto, but because time was a very important factor with me, and I was anxious to do and see as much as possible in the few months that still remained at my disposal.

Provisions had to be laid in for about six days, as it would take anywhere from three to five to reach my destination, according to the condition of the river and the energy displayed by the Indians who were to accompany me. I still had a good store of rice left over, which, with bananas, yucas procured locally, and a few tins of preserved meat which I always carried against an emergency, made up an ample supply.

During the past few days some Cachi Yacu Indians had come in from the forests to trade with Vasquez ; I had refrained from mixing with them, as I had no wish to appear unduly curious, but the sight of the two husky young fellows who

SETTING OUT IN A CANOE

presented themselves on the morning of my departure was so comic that it was all I could do to prevent myself from laughing out loud. The face of each was grotesquely painted in the latest fashion with brilliant scarlet, a preparation made from the seeds of the *achiote* plant. Vasquez, who had been acting as my encyclopædia, told me that no Indian set out into strange territory without painting himself, partly out of custom and partly to show those whom he met where he came from ; in other words, it was the primitive conception of the modern passport.

My four boxes, along with a waterproof bag and tripod, were soon stowed away amidships in a fragile dug-out canoe that was tied up alongside the bank of the river in readiness for the journey. Like the Indians it also was painted, but for reasons not entirely artistic ; in a small way, camouflage or its equivalent is both appreciated and practised by some tribes, and I can vouch from my own experience that a canoe such as this, painted with red, black, and yellow stripes, was much more difficult to detect than a perfectly plain one.

By ten o'clock everything was ready. Ramon and myself made ourselves comfortable in the centre of the canoe, and we cast off from the shore, heading down-stream for Yurimaguas. One of the Indians stood in the bow, his face resplendent with scarlet paint, a long pole in his hands, and his eyes riveted on the waters ahead. Occasionally he waved his arm in this direction or that, indicating to his companion, who sat silently in the stern, which course to take, or else he made a sudden

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

thrust with his pole to direct our craft away from some unseen obstruction in the river.

It was, indeed, a new and fascinating phase of travel to glide noiselessly and easily down the swift-running waters of a river, instead of riding a jaded mule over mountain trails, or else scrambling through the forest on one's own feet. Great satisfaction was also to be derived from the thought that no effort was being expended to hasten our progress; the canoe supported the cargo and the current of the stream propelled us forward at a lively rate. Overhead the sun poured down its molten rays upon us, and on either side trees, trees, trees, nothing but trees, of all shapes and sizes, lined the banks without interruption.

Our progress was so rapid that Balsapuerto was left behind in no time, and the last ridge of the Andes, which we had crossed not many days back, gradually receded from view, till it also was lost in the haze. All signs of habitations ceased, and but for a lonely Indian poling his canoe upstream or some solitary brave standing motionless on the bank like a bronze statue, we might have been the only people in the world.

In the deep water we paddled along leisurely, but where it was shallow poles were brought into play with great effect. On the whole, the river was low, and required keen judgment on the part of the *bogas* to prevent our getting stuck on a sand-bar or else capsized against a submerged log. In one or two stretches where it was particularly shallow we had even to get out and wade, pushing the canoe or else hauling it by means of a fibre rope secured to the bow. My boy

AN INDIAN LOVE SCENE

from Moyobamba appreciated the change in our mode of travel as much, if not more, than I did; he was no longer a porter, but a gentleman of leisure, who lolled back in comfort, smoked cigarettes, and gave occasional orders to the Indians as if he were the *patron* himself.

After two hours' steady going the horizon ahead of us became very black, and it looked as if a storm might burst upon us any minute. Ramon spoke a few words of the Indians' language, so he told them to put in shore and prepare a palm-leaf shelter in the centre of the canoe, under which we could crawl in the event of rain. Accordingly, we tied up close to the bank beneath some overhanging branches, and as the others went off into the forest to find the necessary materials, I remained on guard.

At this point the river made a large sweep, and while sitting back in the canoe my attention was suddenly arrested by the sight of something moving rapidly towards me on the outside of the bend. As the object drew nearer, I made it out to be an Indian girl with a short reddish cloth round her waist, barely reaching to the knees, and a string of beads round her neck. The canoe was evidently hidden from view, as she was quite unconscious of its presence; at any rate, her attention was so taken up looking for something on the opposite shore that her gaze was never turned in my direction.

When quite close she stopped and shouted "Ayu-ayu!" pausing as if listening for an answer, and then shouted again. A third time her plaintive cry echoed over the green waters, and

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impatient that no answer came from the forest she waded out into the river, stopping at a shallow spot in mid-stream. Again she called, and this time a blast of cool wind that swept by, heralding the approach of the coming storm, seemed to carry some suggestion of a reply with it.

In her eagerness she bent down and splashed the water with her hand, sending up the spray about her like a shower of diamonds in the brilliant sunshine. Her features were clearly visible and quite attractive, so that, coupled with her natural grace, she presented a picture of exquisite beauty that is not usually associated with aborigines of the Amazon country.

The response which she had been waiting for so long came at last, and a stalwart Indian suddenly appeared out of the forest. The girl raised her hands above her head as if uttering a prayer of thanks to her Indian gods, and then like a flying fish darted through the water to him. A few guttural sounds were audible, and together they disappeared in the leafy depths of the forest; but for the rippling of the water silence once more reigned supreme, and I rubbed my eyes to make sure that it was not all a dream.

I was told afterwards that a scene such as this was quite unusual amongst these people. There is not much emotion displayed between the sexes, and usually a woman is happy with any man, seldom displaying a special desire for anyone in particular, as was evident in this case.

Some minutes later the men returned, bearing several enormous palm leaves, which they proceeded to weave together in a most ingenious manner to



AUTHOR'S CANOE ON THE "CACHI YACU."

A TROPICAL DELUGE

form the roof of our shelter. Before it was completed the storm broke with great violence, the sun was obscured by a blanket of black clouds, and floods of rain descended, which collected in the canoe with astonishing rapidity, so much so that we had to keep on baling it out vigorously. I sat in the stern like a drenched rat, viewing my surroundings with mingled feelings of dismay and interest. Deluges of this variety were an entirely novel experience for me, although later on I became quite accustomed to them. Fortunately my gear was not getting wet, for besides being covered with a real waterproof sheet, the bundles did not rest directly on the deck of the canoe, but were raised five or six inches out of harm's way on a skeleton framework of poles, and the water which accumulated underneath was never allowed to rise sufficiently high to cause any damage.

The rain ceased as abruptly as it had begun, the wind also dropped, and although my clothes were wringing wet, as soon as the sun came out they dried off thoroughly in its scorching rays. The shelter proved to be artistic as well as useful ; I had imagined that it would look rather ugly, but this was far from the case ; the appearance of the canoe was greatly enhanced by it, and very closely resembled in outline a Venetian gondola.

When all was ready a powerful thrust from the pole of the forward Indian and our slim craft slipped away from the bank, swung round in the current, and once more slid gracefully off downstream over a fine expanse of water, comparatively free from obstructions or shallow channels. Each bend in the river exposed a more enchanting vista

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

than the last: new lights and shadows, new varieties of trees and vegetation, till there seemed to be no end to the combinations possible.

Here and there the endless mantle of green which reached down to the water's edge was broken by sand-bars, or *playas*, of such inviting aspect that I was tempted to get out and examine one more closely. It looked as if the Indians divined my thoughts, as before long the canoe was beached at the top end of a long stretch of soft white sand. I was about to jump on shore when Ramon motioned me to keep my place for a moment, while the *bogas* landed in advance and walked cautiously along the water's edge, with their long knives held high above their heads. I could not imagine what had possessed them, till both blades flashed into the water, and two fish minus their heads were hauled out by the tail. It was a remarkable demonstration of skill, repeated many times with unfailing accuracy, till we had a nice assortment of fresh fish at our disposal; none were over twelve inches long, but small fry were just as good eating as large ones, as the evening meal went to prove.

Thus the afternoon wore on, the sun shifted well round to our backs, relieving our eyes from its reflected glare on the water, which at times had been a little unpleasant. The air was delightfully cool, and we drifted along amongst idealistic surroundings, with not even a fly to disturb us.

The reverie into which I had fallen was suddenly broken; the forward *boga*, who had been straining over to one side to get a better view ahead as we approached a bend, lost his balance, and with

OVERBOARD

a resounding splash went overboard. For a moment I had visions of my valuable cargo being precipitated into the river, but instead of clutching at the canoe to regain his equilibrium and thereby upsetting everything, this brown son of the forest took a graceful plunge into the green waters and then climbed back on board with great dexterity, just as if nothing had happened. No one commented upon the incident, so I also remained silent, but in my innermost self I could not help but admire the extraordinary agility and judgment which he had shown in avoiding a catastrophe.

So far as the occupants of the canoe were concerned, it made little difference to any of us if we upset or not, but, alas! one submersion of the boxes containing my films would mean the complete loss of all photos taken and damage to my cameras, so that no further exposure could be made. The possibility of such an event occurring was for ever before me, and was the source of continual anxiety; how I ever got as far as I did without an upset was beyond comprehension, since on the return trip the avoidance of logs, whirlpools, and rapids became our regular routine day after day.

The superstitious would be interested to know that the fateful day finally did come on a Friday, the 13th day of September; fortunately it was towards the end of my travels, and, although at a time when there was particularly interesting material to be photographed, I had to console myself with the philosophical thought that "it might have been worse."

After the slight diversion just related we settled

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

down to another extended period of peace and quiet, lasting for over an hour. We were discussing the advisability of camping for the night when the forward *boga*, tense with excitement, pointed to a commotion in the water ahead of us. Without losing a second he shipped his pole in the canoe, grabbed a *machete* by his side, and was once more overboard, only this time slashing about in the water like a madman. He soon accomplished his object, and swam ashore, dragging after him a large fish about three feet long and having a head at least ten inches broad. It was the most repulsive monster I had ever seen, with its mouth under the nose and its front fins terminating in bunches of bright red bristles; a similar growth protected its gills, and gave it a most ferocious aspect.

The Indians, much elated over their catch, immediately started to remove its hard scales and get it ready for cooking; it was evident that with such a prize not much more progress could be expected, and the sooner we camped the sooner our growing appetites would be satisfied. At the first opportunity we tied up along the shore for the night, and as there were hundreds of palms growing everywhere, we soon had a neat roof over our heads which would keep us dry under the worst conditions of weather. The Indians cut the large fish into hunks, which they roasted in the embers of a fire, but Ramon and myself preferred to boil the small fellows and eat them with rice. The banquet was concluded at 7.15, and every one having done full justice to the simple fare, we turned in.

NOISES OF THE FOREST

Sleep did not come my way immediately because so many interesting sights had crowded themselves into the last twelve hours that I enjoyed turning them over again in my mind. I had my mosquito net up as a matter of precaution, but there was no real need for it, as there were not any insects to bother me on account of the evening breeze from the mountains, which was very pronounced, and probably accounted for the name of the place "Wyra Yacu," or "windy water," which was what the Indians called it. This breeze from the hills was purely local and never powerful at the best of times, the maximum distance at which it could be felt away from the foot of the Andes was probably not more than fifteen to twenty miles. At our next camp, Baradero, it was still just noticeable, but beyond that point I had to accustom myself to a sultry atmosphere and the continual buzzing of mosquitoes throughout the long hours of darkness.

Our night at Wyra Yacu will always remain in my memory by reason of the many new noises of the forest to which I was introduced; birds, animals, and insects kept up an incessant chant all the night through; they were not content with uttering their respective cries once or twice and being done with it, but seemed to derive fiendish delight in taking up as prominent a position as possible, and then settling down to a steady concert with no intermissions. If one member of the orchestra stopped, another would start, so that there would be no interruption in the programme, which lasted almost till daybreak.

When we awoke such a dense mist hung round

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

about us that we could hardly discern the trees on the opposite bank. To have set out under these conditions, in a narrow river at low water, would have been to court disaster, and we were forced to wait for the sun to dissipate it before moving. After a good breakfast off more fish, we left at 9.15, well fortified for the day's work ahead of us.

The sun was low and off our starboard bow, making it difficult, as well as unpleasant, to keep a look-out ahead. For several hours on end we slid along between high walls of forest growth that were a continual source of joy to behold; occasionally the top of a tree would be covered with a mass of flowers, red, mauve, or purple; otherwise everything was green, sometimes dark green and sometimes light green, but always green.

At the confluence of the Parapapura, a river carrying about the same volume of water as the Cachi Yacu, there were more sand-bars and open stretches, but we did not stop to inspect them or behold any fish as we had done the day before, as our destination, Baradero, was barely a mile below this point, and I was anxious to make it early in the afternoon, so as to get some "movies" of my men and the canoe before the light failed.

Just as we arrived, Francisco Mesa, the enterprising citizen who lived at this remote outpost, was about to start up-stream for Balsapuerto, but he told his wife, a pleasant-looking woman, to put us up and make us as comfortable as possible. We were accordingly assigned a place to sleep in, the Indians, Ramon, and myself all occupying the same room. The house was of a kind similar to the one I lived in at Balsapuerto, but much

A TRADER'S LIFE

larger, consisting of five or six rooms in all. Instead of rushing on to Yurimaguas the following day, as was my original intention, I decided to prolong my stay and take my time about securing the photographs which I had set my mind on getting.

It was always interesting to me to know how men like Francisco Mesa managed to keep alive. He was supposed to be a trader, but so far as I could gather there was practically no one to trade with, except a few half-castes living in the vicinity, who could not have been very profitable customers at the best of times. His chief source of income was probably derived from the sale of *aguardiente*, or rum, made from the sugar-cane, which grew abundantly close to the house, the Indians apparently being the largest customers of the product; both of mine must have done themselves pretty well, as each night they yelled in their delirium until I was rather nervous for my own safety.

When the cane had matured it was cut and brought to the house, where it was crushed in a small all-metal *trapiche*, or rolls, worked by oxen, and the juice collected in large copper cauldrons, finally emerging, after the most primitive treatment possible, in the form of crude sugar, not of a brown colour, as is usually the case, but quite white. Bananas and yucas were the chief source of food, but a few head of cattle, pigs, and an assortment of fowls were always at hand for an occasional change of diet. No doubt many natural products of value were found in the forests, but so far as I could ascertain no one bothered

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

with them, and rubber, if it grew, was not worth collecting in view of the low prices which prevailed.

Taken altogether, it is difficult to see how it would be possible to do anything but just live in a place like this ; provided one were satisfied to vegetate, well and good, but even then I should prefer Moyobamba, which held out the remote possibility of a future, and was more picturesque in its surroundings. Baradero was far from being unpleasantly situated, but it lacked the wooded hills and the ample valley which were responsible for much of Moyobamba's charm.

Mesa's house was on a hillock commanding a fine view of the river, and at sufficient elevation to look down upon the forest, which extended without interruption so far as the eye could see on all sides. Out of this wilderness of green the sun rose every morning, timidly but surely driving away the cobwebs of mist that floated over the tree-tops, and into it again it plunged each evening with incredible splendour, bathed in all the colours typical of a tropical sky.

Time did not hang heavily on my hands ; all day I was out and about seeing things and getting photographs or motion pictures wherever possible. A quarter of a mile up-stream was an open stretch of water and a large sand-bar, where I was able to get some good " movies " of my canoe and the *bogas* who accompanied me. They were very nervous of the camera, but with patience and Ramon's help I was able to procure some interesting material indelibly impressed on several hundred feet of film.

Señora Mesa had but one solitary child, about



AN INDIAN FROM THE CACHI YACU.



INDIAN FROM THE PARANAPURA PAINTED FOR THE JOURNEY.

AN IMPOSSIBLE INFANT

two years old, which deserves mention. It would eat everything it could get hold of, banana skins included; never have I seen an animal, human or otherwise, devour such an assortment of rubbish. When it was not grubbing for food on the earthen floor, it would howl and scream like a parrot, but the fond mother paid not the slightest heed to it, and once when I asked if possibly it was ill, she replied that children were always like that. When evening came on it would fall asleep out of sheer exhaustion, much to the relief of every one. Then Ramon, quite in his element, would play cards with my hostess, leaving me free to write up my notes or reflect on the happenings of the day in peace.

I was told that Baradero could be reached in one day's journey from Balsapuerto, providing a start was made before eight in the morning. To return against the current requires two or three days. Baradero to Yurimaguas is considerably longer, taking two days down-stream and four days up. When the day finally came for our departure my companions and myself were a little late in getting away. This time I was the culprit, for as we were about to set out a number of Indians arrived decked out in their native finery, and nothing short of unpacking the camera and photographing them would satisfy me. It was not a long process, but it took some time to get the men friendly and at their ease, so that their photos would not have a painfully strained expression. They were of an entirely different tribe to those in Balsapuerto, who were of Jebero stock; their facial characteristics differed

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

considerably : better featured, although rather heavy, and with none of the Mongolian look about the eyes.

All of the Indians whom I had met to date came in contact with traders, and so could hardly be called wild, except in comparison with the half-caste settlers. These latter people were usually very surly and bad-tempered, showing that the hand of civilisation had not dealt kindly with them, or made their lot in this world any happier. In subsequent encounters with tribes who see little, if anything, of the whites, I was surprised to find them naturally happy and cheerful, just like children, always ready to join in a hunt through the forest or go fishing in the river, and many a good laugh I have had in their company. To see these people it is necessary to get still further away from the beaten track than Baradero, which, to the people of Europe, might seem an impossibility, yet two or three days on foot through the woods either side of the Paranapura and the traveller would soon find himself in places which have only been trodden by the bare feet of savages.

It requires a peculiar temperament and an understanding of human nature not possessed by the average man, to be successful in one's dealings with such people. Sometimes the unconscious ignoring of a trivial custom may result in open hostility, not necessarily a free fight, but an antagonistic atmosphere which may be just as bad, ending in valuable information being withheld or else useful assistance not being rendered. On my last expedition, for instance, I encountered some Indians who have the not unusual custom,

ONCE MORE ON THE MOVE

when entering a strange house, of leaving all their weapons outside, by way of showing that their mission is a peaceful one. A member of my party visited such a household carelessly carrying his rifle. He was surprised and somewhat annoyed when the inmates sat in stony silence and could not be induced to speak a word. Later on, when these same people were approached in the right manner they were perfectly friendly and even helpful, but they never forgave the first offender for his display of bad manners.

At 10.20 everything was back in the canoe, healths were drunk, and amidst much shouting we swiftly disappeared from view down the flowing road to Yurimaguas. My *bogas* did not care to indulge in any more drinks; they had had enough and realised the fact, as to all offers of a further supply they replied "Nani," or "No." Fortunately the excess which they had indulged in did not impair their capacity for work, or their skill in manipulating our craft, for all day long up to 4.30 they plied their paddles incessantly, and but for a short stop of twenty minutes their efforts never relaxed for an instant.

In places the river widened out considerably, and in others narrowed down between high banks thirty or forty feet high. Occasionally there were bad obstructions, such as tree-trunks or piles of debris, but these were chiefly on bends, and with successful handling did not hinder a canoe travelling with the current. We slipped through gaps without a hitch, although, of course, had we been coming up-stream there would have been a very different story to tell. Another noticeable

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change for the better was the absence of shallow channels such as we had encountered in the upper reaches of the Cachi Yacu, where the water hurried along with considerable noise and commotion. Here it moved softly between well-defined walls of tropical forests, only complaining when obstructions were put in its way. Many beautiful butterflies were to be seen, the usual large morphos floating majestically over the water, and smaller ones darting about singly or else hovering in clouds over some particular spot on the banks that fascinated them.

About 4 p.m. we passed a clearing on the south bank at the confluence of a small river called Mauca Yacta, or "old village." An old woman was chewing yuca outside the dwelling, and as we drew up along the shore Ramon called out to her in his most polite manner if we might camp for the night; she snarled at him in return, mumbling something about there being no room and the hour being early, hence we hastily withdrew and carried on for another thirty minutes, coming to rest at an open spot where there was an abandoned hut.

Habitations of this kind, when occupied, are often the most charming places imaginable, which seem to radiate the very essence of life in its simplest possible terms, but deserted they exude a stifling atmosphere of death, from which anyone who approaches them instinctively recoils.

I removed the door to look inside, while the men were making the canoe fast and carrying the cargo up the bank; all was dark, mildew had spread its blight over everything, numerous

AN ABANDONED HUT

repulsive fungi adhered to the rotting timbers, and through every crack rapacious vines had crept, covering much of the floor with their bleached foliage, as if trying to obliterate traces of some tragedy that had been enacted within. Over in a corner lay several logs star-fashion, where the last fire had burned itself out, and round about a few earthen vessels. The air also was laden with noxious odours of decay, and made me wonder what was the true history of this deserted spot ; here surely the aspirations and hopes of some one must have come to an untimely end, but no one knew, or ever will know, so lifting the door back in place I left the solving of the mystery to the spirits of the forest, who whispered it from one tree-top to another throughout the lonely hours of the night.

We selected a more cheerful place out in the open for our camp, and in short order a fire was blazing away, and we were well established for the night. All day the heat had been very severe, and frequently I was glad to crawl under the palm-leaf shelter of the canoe for a brief spell in the shade. Even at the late hour of 5.30, when I sat down to write up my notes, the perspiration ran off me in streams, and the screech of parrots winging their way homeward overhead, all helped to remind me that I was really in the Amazon country at last.

We took advantage of a fine moon to make an early start at four o'clock. The pandemonium which had reigned in the forest all night had completely subsided ; the silence was almost oppressive ; occasionally the mournful cry of a bird or the

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splash of some big fish in the river split the silence ; once there was a terrifying crash as a large tree nearby fell to its doom ; otherwise not a sound was heard.

With luck we expected to make Yurimaguas by evening, but at just what hour I had no idea. It was a good opportunity to practise the sign-language with the Indians, so I called to one of them and pointed east, saying Yurimaguas, then waited for a reply. He looked in the direction of the rising sun, pointed to it, and then slowly moved his arm over his head in a semicircular sweep, coming to rest at an angle of about 25° with the horizon. According to his way of reckoning we would reach our destination when the sun was at that position in the heavens, or roughly 4 p.m. We actually stepped on shore at 3.30, so he was not far out. It is surprising how quickly one gets into the habit of relying on the sun instead of a watch, and a little practice soon makes perfect. For amusement I would often test Ramon's judgment against my watch, and found him almost invariably to be correct within half an hour.

After a light breakfast we broke camp and slipped off silently down-stream as the first grey streak of dawn diffused itself through the mist. Forty minutes later we passed Armana Yacu ("bathing water"), a stream coming in on the south bank, and after three and a half hours Yana Yacu ("black water"), also on the south bank. These seemed to be the only tributaries of any size, although two small ones occurred on the northern shore and a small one called Chambira,

THE PARANAPURA

which is more of a brook than a river, which was passed on the south bank at 1.20 p.m.

The entire course of the Paranapura is very tortuous, and twists about in every conceivable direction; sometimes we were actually heading south-west, the direction we were supposed to be coming from; in several places we could even see the mountains we had traversed on foot. The innumerable bends in the river broke the monotony of the journey, but at times they were decidedly tiresome. When travelling in the Sierra time is lost by continually struggling up and down steep mountain slopes, which, after a hard day's ride, only advance one a few miles if measured in a straight line as the crow flies. On the rivers time is lost to the same extent by following all the twists and turns of the main channel, which result in traversing almost three times the actual distance necessary. In both cases flying machines would save an enormous amount of time, reducing weeks of laborious effort to as many hours of comfortable travelling.

Raimondi, the great Italian traveller and cartographer, shows the course of the Paranapura with great accuracy, and my rough observations seemed to agree very closely with his rendering of it. I always carried one of his maps with me, and the more I travelled through Peru the greater admiration I had for his work. In places he was, of course, greatly in error, but the average accuracy with which he has covered an enormous area is certainly astounding; of all general maps, past and present, his is by far the best and most reliable. His names of places are often misleading,

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especially those about which he got second-hand information, but they are no worse than modern maps, the chief object of which seems to be the insertion of as many names as possible, in order to give the impression that the country is densely populated. Most of these places are not inhabited, and never have been, the name being given by some passing traveller. I recall a typical case in point on the Marañon, where I met a half-caste trader coming down-stream on a raft laden with rubber ; we camped together for the night, and my *mestizo* friend, helping himself lavishly to my small supply of rum, declared that in celebration of the great occasion the spot where we met should in future be known as "Cordial," and no doubt it will appear as such on future maps of the district.

The day's journey was without incident ; we drifted down-stream till the rhythmic splash of the paddles, coupled with the intense heat, was enough to produce profound hypnotic sleep ; there were no diversions or exciting episodes to distract our attention either ; towards the latter part we saw a number of habitations, one in particular at Limon which was perched up on the side of quite a large hill, probably 200 feet high. Directly on the other side of this hill the Huallaga river flows ; both rivers are close to each other at this point, but they separate once more, and it is a two-and-a-half hours' journey down-stream before they actually join. At the junction the Paranapura assumes a very appreciable gradient, which is particularly noticeable in the dry season.

Our canoe went jostling down the turbulent



A TYPICAL HABITATION IN THE RIVER COUNTRY.

YURIMAGUAS

waters for 200 yards at a great rate ; we then swung round into a back eddy, kept close inshore, and laboriously poled our way for twenty minutes up the Huallaga to the town of Yurimaguas, which we finally reached after a day of ten hours' steady travelling.

CHAPTER VII

THE town of Yurimaguas consists of a motley array of buildings strung out along the high ground on the west bank of the Huallaga river, where it is secure from inundations at all seasons of the year. It looks much larger than it actually is, but its importance as a commercial centre cannot be gauged altogether by the amount of ground it covers. To one fresh from the mountains the incessant flood of water which sweeps by its very doors gives it the appearance of a seaport, rather than an inland town, 2,500 miles away from the sea ; as a matter of fact, this impression is not far removed from the truth, because it can be reached quite easily by river steamer from the Atlantic seaboard in five weeks, whereas it had taken me full two months of toil to get to it over the Andes from Pacasmayo, barely 300 miles away in a straight line. That it was more accessible from the outside world than any other place I had seen for a long time was evident from the abundance of that useful but intensely ugly material, corrugated iron, which adorned the roofs of half the houses visible. Many windows also were of glass, a commodity I had not seen since leaving Cajamarca.

A letter of introduction to one of the leading

A DELIGHTFUL HOST

citizens of the town, Sr. Miguel Acosta, served me in good stead, and resulted in my spending a couple of enjoyable days at his house, while waiting for a launch to take me on to Iquitos ; otherwise I should have been obliged to more or less camp out in some empty hut, as I had done in Balsapuerto.

Don Miguel was a man of unusual energy for one who had spent so much of his life in the hot river country, and on top of this his charming personality made him a delightful and entertaining host. His wife had been dead some years, and the children were all at school in Lima, the capital of the Republic, which might have been at the other end of the world so far as he was concerned, for he never saw them, and never would, until their education was completed.

Needless to say, his family had not travelled the way I had just come, nor even by another route considerably easier called the Pichis, but had gone down the Amazon to Para, and thence all round the north of South America through the Panama Canal, and south again along the Pacific coast to Callao and Lima. The time taken to make this journey can be better appreciated by saying that it is possible to travel from London to Lima and back again in almost the same time as it now takes to get from Yurimaguas to Lima.

Without standing on ceremony, Don Miguel had the *bogas* bring up my gear from the canoe and deposit it in his comfortable house, where I settled down to a brief spell of civilised existence.

It would be difficult to describe what my impressions were on viewing the Huallaga for

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the first time from an elevated position on the bank. To say that its great width and the enormous volume of water which it carried astounded me is to put it mildly. The Parana-pura, in its lower reaches, seemed to be a river of some size, especially when surveyed from a canoe, yet in comparison it was an insignificant brook, hardly worth marking on the map. This was the dry season, too, and a large sand-bar, 200 yards across, was lying exposed ; in the rainy season this bar was not only awash, but actually ten feet under water, the total rise amounting to twenty feet, which gave a depth of over forty feet of water in the main channel, up which 2,000 ton steamers could navigate all the way from the mouth of the Amazon.

As a result of the war the whole Upper Amazon country was suffering from acute depression in every line of effort ; prior to this event the bulk of the food consumed, such as corn, rice, beans, and potatoes, was imported from Europe ; now this source of supply was cut off through lack of ships and high freight rates, etc. Ordinarily, it would have been a blessing in disguise to have the country thus thrown back on its own resources, but the rainy season just passed had been phenomenally wet, and the floods which had crept out over the surrounding country had completely destroyed all the plantations of bananas and yucas ; for this reason there was a serious food shortage, which almost amounted to starvation, amongst the poorer people.

I soon learnt, to my sorrow, that even if food were scarce, there was no shortage of mosquitoes ; the first evening they got after me with so much

BUYING A TICKET

vigour, as I sat out in the open chatting with some of the natives, that I was forced to seek refuge under my net. It was the first occasion on which I had been really tormented by an insect of any kind since leaving the sandy stretches of the Pacific coast, and it was not to be the last by any manner of means. When I complained about being bitten, my companions only laughed, saying that there were no *sancudos* (mosquitoes) in Yurimaguas, the true significance of which remark I did not fully appreciate till later on in my travels, when it became a regular part of the night's work to fortify myself against the attacks of these vicious insects, which persistently hovered round in clouds, hoping to get at their victim in an unguarded moment.

I had barely settled down in my new quarters before I started preparations for my departure. It might come as a surprise to those who consider the crossing of the South American continent a herculean task to know that once in Yurimaguas a ticket—a real ticket—can be purchased for the large sum of £2 that entitles the bearer to a passage on an uncomfortable river launch as far as the town of Iquitos, situated at the head waters of deep sea navigation on the Amazon. From Iquitos one can travel in a luxuriously appointed steamer of 3,000 tons the remaining two thousand odd miles to the Atlantic, and there the journey ends.

After the strenuous and varied conditions of travel which I had encountered so far, this sounds as if the finale of my excursion into the wilds would be dull in the extreme, and so it might have been but for my decision to turn west once more at

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Iquitos and return to the coast of Peru by another route which, according to the natives, was impassable ; it meant fighting one's way up a stream teeming with rapids and every other evil known to man, to say nothing of a hostile tribe of Indians who had the ungentlemanly habit of decapitating their enemies and shrinking their heads down to the size of an orange. With such contingencies in view there was no need for me to be despondent over the prospects of a monotonous ending to my journey.

Whilst on the subject of transcontinental routes, a few remarks concerning those through Northern Peru and Ecuador may not be out of place. To begin with, all of these have Iquitos as their main objectives, and all take advantage of tributaries of the Amazon to get there. There is only one regular official route which can be traversed in comfort of a relative kind ; it is called the Pichis, and starts from Lima, crossing the Andes by rail to Oroya, then by a splendid trail via La Merced to Puerto Bermudez, and thence by canoe and launch down the Pachitea and Ucayali rivers. It is an easy trip, presents no particular difficulties, and can be traversed in either direction with equal facility. Further north there is a little-used route starting from Cerro de Pasco, which can be reached by rail ; several days' ride on mule-back from this point the Huallaga is encountered. The descent of this river on raft is dangerous and exciting, the last rapids being about eighty miles above Yurimaguas, after which the journey is easy. Next, comes the route in from Pacasmayo, one of the most arduous as well as the most interesting.

THE LAUNCH *ADOLFO*

Further north another crossing can be made, starting from Chiclayo or Paita via Jaen, and down the Marañon to Iquitos. That section of the country from Bella Vista to the Pongo de Manseriche is quite uninhabited except for Indians, and dangerous rapids are sprinkled along the course of the river ; this is the route I took on my return journey.

In Ecuador the Andes can be traversed in several places, but the most important ones strike the head waters of either the Santiago, Pastaza, or Napo rivers, each offering about the same difficulties to the traveller. The last-named river flows into the Amazon below Iquitos, but a portage can be made overland to avoid this up-stream work if necessary, or else one can travel on down-stream without going near the town at all.

The launch which plied between Yurimaguas and Iquitos once a fortnight rejoiced in the name of *Adolfo* and was one of the largest employed on the Upper Amazon. According to the published time-table it should have left Yurimaguas the very day of my arrival, but luckily it was not running on schedule, otherwise I should have been doomed to remain two whole weeks waiting for its return, or else purchased a raft and floated down-stream to my destination. I was rather tempted to follow this latter course, so as to get more intimate knowledge of the river, but the absence of a moon meant very slow progress, since we would be unable to travel at night. Fortunately for me the river was extremely low, and the *Adolfo* got stuck on the mud when almost within sight of the town ; here it remained for

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twenty-five hours, puffing and panting in its efforts to get free, until a freshet came along at a convenient moment and floated it off.

It sometimes happens that a launch will get so securely wedged that it has to wait a month or two for the rainy season to commence before it can move. Taking it all round, it struck me that the captains of these craft spent some anxious moments in the exercise of their duty, and I never envied them their job.

The *Adolfo* announced its belated arrival by means of a few piercing screams from its whistle, which reverberated over the forest in a vulgar manner, quite out of keeping with the surroundings. As soon as it had been tied up securely along the edge of a sand-bar, I went over to inspect it more closely, and incidentally book my passage for the return trip. The captain, a young man of considerable ability, showed me round with a good deal of pride. Although one could scarcely compare his packet with the *Olympic*, it was spacious and well laid out for the services it had to perform. The few cabins on the upper deck were merely dark cupboards, in which the more prosperous passengers could retire for the night ; at any rate, they were clean, which is saying a good deal, considering that the launch was thirteen years old. Fully loaded with eighty tons of cargo, it drew seven feet of water, and was propelled by a 120 h.p. engine at a speed of from ten to twelve knots.

My intention had been to take Ramon with me to Iquitos, but the poor fellow began to feel homesick, and asked if he might not return to his beloved Moyobamba. He had worked well and been a



THE "ADOLFO" STOPS TO TAKE ON A SUPPLY OF WOOD,

RAMON RETURNS HOME

really cheerful companion, whose society I had much enjoyed, so it was difficult to part with him ; however, I had a sympathetic feeling, and did not press him to remain. The following day he set out on foot in high spirits, the various cooking utensils which I had presented him with dangling round his neck, a good supply of provisions, and plenty of money in his pocket ; happy as a lark, he was profuse in his thanks for the trifles I had given him.

Since that day I have seen him many times, not in the flesh—nor in the spirit either, as I am not a spiritualist—but through the medium of that commonplace but no less wonderful invention, the motion picture machine. He figured in a good many of the films taken, and to see his animated picture helping in the manufacture of panama hats, or else sitting in the canoe giving orders to the Indians, invariably makes me laugh, and recalls the many amusing incidents in which he took the leading part.

Preparations for continuing my journey were not difficult ; everything was packed up, and it was only a case of transferring my belongings to the confined quarters on board the launch. I paid a visit to the sub-prefect to satisfy the natural curiosity of the official mind about me, and very glad I was that Don Miguel had suggested my doing so ; the more friends one has the better, and this man certainly proved himself a most agreeable addition to the magic circle. He told me much concerning the commercial possibilities of the Huallaga district, and how one day it would develop into an important centre. I was inclined to agree

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with him, as on several occasions I had seen pronounced oil sepages and other indications of this valuable product, samples of which gave most excellent results on analysis.

Oil is found in other rivers also, and my personal opinion is that oil will prove the salvation of the Upper Amazon, replacing rubber, cotton, and other products which to-day are not worth anything. Yet another industry which will thrive in the years to come will be the production of alcohol from the superabundance of vegetation, especially some of the hard woods which abound in the forests. The occurrence of salt is fairly extensive to the south of the Amazon, or Marañon, as it is called in Peru, but to the north of this river in a group of effluents, namely, the Morona, Pastaza, Tigre, and Napo, it is seldom, if ever, encountered.

Many years ago the Indians used to come from these rivers to the Huallaga in search of salt, which represented a journey of considerable magnitude for a dug-out canoe. The Indians near the Upper Huallaga have a primitive method of mining it, wherever it occurs in blankets near the river bank. Their interesting method is to expose the upper surface and cause water to trickle over it in little grooves about eight inches apart. Under the action of the water the grooves get so deep that they cut right through the mass to bedrock; the blocks are then broken up into fragments and carried away.

As already stated, everything at the time of my visit was at a standstill, and there was barely enough money to keep business going, let alone embark on new developments which necessitated capital. I

WRITING UNDER DIFFICULTIES

did not have to look far to appreciate this ; from the window of my room I could see a house fifty yards away, the whole side of which had fallen away, exposing two entire rooms to view. The owner had not the means to repair the damage, and it was really amusing to see the utmost unconcern with which the occupants went to bed every night and got up in the morning, just as if the wall had been there.

On the afternoon of Thursday, August 1st, I transferred my abode to the good ship *Adolfo*. No one seemed to know exactly when we should sail, neither did anyone care. Some of the passengers said we were due to leave immediately, others hinted at a delay of several days. The cause of the uncertainty was the arrival of a canoe from up river bearing the news that three rafts, laden with cattle and provisions for Iquitos, were on their way, and apparently we could not sail until they had arrived and transhipped their cargo.

To help pass the time away I sat down at a table on deck to write up my notes. It was a hopeless task ; the natives—to whom writing and maps seemed to be a distinct novelty—hung round in a circle, watching every movement I made with so much interest that pen and paper had to be put away, and I paced up and down the little deck instead.

Before long it started to pour with rain, and it was hard to find a dry spot to stand in ; then, when the rain had let up, the sun shone with renewed vigour, and I was treated to a steaming vapour bath till darkness fell and brought a little relief. Even then do not let it be imagined that

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I was left in peace for long ; it was now the mosquitoes' turn to torment me, and they did so with such effect that the only course to pursue was to retire to my hot and stuffy cabin, and, safely under my net, hope and pray that daylight would come soon. A few hours were passed in fitful slumber ; shouts from the crew at frequent intervals would awaken me, until the combination of noises and stifling atmosphere proved unbearable, and in despair I got up at 3 a.m. and went on deck once more.

The rafts we had been expecting had arrived, and their cargo was being actively stowed away in our hold. Close over our heads clouds of damp mists were drifting slowly by, occasionally the pale crescent moon looked through as if disgusted with life, like myself. When all the freight was on board there still remained half a dozen head of cattle to be dealt with. They were out to cause trouble, balking at the gang-plank and refusing to cross it. The captain was impatient at the delay, and made short shift of them ; one end of a strong line round the base of the horns and a few turns of the other end round the pulley of a steam-winch, was all that was necessary, and they were yanked on board despite their desperate struggles of resistance. One slipped off into the water, causing a frightful commotion, but he was soon recovered and tied up safely on the lower deck with his companions.

At four o'clock we were actually under weigh, and had dropped down-stream a mile or two, only to encounter a heavy mist, which arrested further progress until it lifted.

THE START

At 6.30 we really did start, and, the current in our favour, we shot off down the river at a good speed of thirteen knots. The artificial breeze, produced by our passage through the air, put new life into every one, and effectively dispelled the unsavoury odours that had wafted up from the lower deck while we lay at anchor. It seems absurd to think that such trifles as unpleasant smells, heat, and mosquitoes could produce a state of affairs that was well nigh insufferable, yet such was the case; to me, insect pests were absolute torture, and had I ever been called upon to choose between, say, short rations or no mosquitoes, I would certainly have preferred the scanty food supply every time.

We had not been under weigh long before the sun had chased away every vestige of the morning mist, and we were treated to an exceptionally clear day. To add to the bodily comfort of the passengers some excellent coffee was served on deck, with a boiled banana or two to cheer them up, after which I settled down to enjoy the novelty of my surroundings to the full. It might be supposed that during the past two months I had experienced pretty well every phase of travel possible, but life on a river launch was yet a new sensation to add to my list, and one not easily forgotten. We made our way swiftly down-stream, sometimes close to the shore—a shelving bank of mud thirty feet high, bedecked with all varieties of tropical foliage—or else away out in the centre of the river.

Once in a while there would be a blaze of coloured flowers on some tree top, but it was an unusual occurrence and generally excited comment. Glaring sand-bars were laid bare to the sun at every bend,

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some small, others stretching for hundreds of yards without a break ; then again the river would divide leaving a picturesque island in the centre. How different everything was to the great Andean uplands which I had traversed not long ago ; even the language used about me seemed strange, and I had to accustom my ear to many new words. Heretofore conversation had centred round mules, trails, or alfalfa, in the vernacular of which I had become quite expert ; now every one talked about sand-bars, turtles, forests, etc., which were quite new topics, and made me feel more like a stranger in a foreign land than I had ever felt before. Even a dictionary was not always helpful, as most objects had local names that were quite unrecognisable ; for instance, in speaking of turtles I used the word *tortuga* as being what seemed to me near enough to have people understand, but it meant nothing to my companions, and it was only when I saw one of these animals on a sand-bar some time later that I discovered the right name to use was *charapa*.

Of passengers we carried but few ; Marco Morey, a personal friend of Don Agustin in Moyobamba, was amongst them, and he and half a dozen other men were going on a voyage of discovery up the Rio Potro, a small tributary of the Marañon, on the south bank, just above the military outpost of Barranca. His idea was to see if a passage could be found across country connecting the Marañon with the Mayo river. The large dug-out canoe that he was using had been lashed to the side of the *Adolfo*, and was being transported as far as Tres Unidos, from which point they would have

CRASHING OVER SAND-BARS

to transfer their belongings to its fragile hull and continue their journey under less favourable conditions. How well they succeeded in their undertaking will be related further on. The only other passenger of distinction was a repulsive ruffian with kinky hair from the Congo ; he occupied the lower bunk in my cabin, and did not impress me very favourably. Fortunately for me he went on shore the next day at some uninviting spot, and I had no feelings of regret over the loss of his company.

Six times during the day we anchored and sent out a dinghy ahead to sound out a doubtful passage ; then when once the captain's mind was made up as to the best course to steer, nothing stopped him ; he went full tilt ahead, sliding and scraping over shallow sand-bars with exclamations from the passengers of " Oh ! oh ! " as we nearly came to rest on some of the worst. Fortunately we did not get stuck, largely as a result of the launch being down at the bow ; if we did strike any sand the momentum of the first impact was enough to clear a passage over which the stern passed easily. Worse than the sand-bars were the submerged timbers, which we collided with on several occasions in a most alarming manner.

In the afternoon a heavy storm sprung up, accompanied by an unusually violent wind ; white caps appeared without a moment's warning, and the water became so rough that I should not have cared to venture upon it in anything but a big boat. The rain came down in torrents, swamping Morey's canoe, which broke adrift, and soaking every one and everything in good shape. The roof

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over the top deck might have been very satisfactory as a sunshade, but it was no more use than a sieve against the deluge which descended upon it. My cabin was flooded, and the few clothes belonging to the "Atrocity from the Congo," which he had left lying about, were treated to an accidental washing which otherwise it might never have been their good fortune to experience. After a time the disturbance blew over, and in the cool, pleasant air of the evening I stood by the rail, wrapt in contemplation of the scenes that glided before me.

Night came on rapidly, and the darkness was so obscure that I supposed it would be impossible to navigate the winding channel, but we continued, nevertheless, without a stop up to 9 p.m., when the captain announced his intention of taking on fuel for the boilers. There was a wooding post on the bank, and as we groped our way to it there was an ominous grating sound, followed by a sudden jerk that almost threw me off my feet.

There was no doubt about it this time, and we came to an abrupt standstill on a sand-bar. The engine was thrown into reverse, and as that did not do any good we went full speed ahead again, shaking the ship violently from stem to stern. The crew ran round the deck, took soundings on all sides, and shouted out something about *brazos*; the engines were then set in motion once more, still without any result. As far as I could see we were snugly settled on the mud for the night, and as there was no chance of getting off I turned into my bunk and went to sleep.

Two hours later I woke up with a start, conscious



THE AMAZON TWO HUNDRED MILES ABOVE IQUITOS.

A COLLISION

of some most awful jolts as the launch went bumping over a number of submerged logs. Shouts of *palo!* or log, went up on all sides; my cabin companion was out of his bunk like a jack rabbit, joining in the chorus, and exhorting the passengers not to be afraid, and reassuring them (himself included) that the whole launch was not about to founder.

By this time I was wide awake, turning over in my mind what effect the logs might have had on the ship's hull; then came another confused crash of splintering wood, and boughs of trees came breaking through the thin partition of the launch's superstructure. So accustomed was I to consider a ship in connection with the water, that this very intimate association with the forest came as rather a shock. I got up and made my way on deck to see what was taking place, and there learnt that we were at exactly the same place as when I had turned in, only now, instead of on the mud, we were well entangled in the overhanging branches of trees which lined the bank.

An animated and voluminous conversation was being carried on in the darkness between the captain and a man on shore; opinions were being expressed pretty freely, the upshot being that there was no firewood to be had anyhow, and we might just as well have saved ourselves much trouble and gone straight on without stopping. It took some time to disentangle ourselves from the Montaña scenery, but we did so by degrees, and backed slowly away from the shore; then the signal was given once more for full steam ahead. The navigator must have had eyes like a cat, for it was

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impossible for me to make head or tail of the empty black void into which we recklessly plunged.

The hour was late, but I had no inclination to turn in to my wrecked quarters any sooner than was absolutely necessary. Almost every one else wisely slept on deck, where it was cool and pleasant, their hammocks being slung in all directions, and so close that it was difficult to walk about without knocking up against one and causing the occupant to indulge in a few select cuss words for having been disturbed in his slumbers. For an hour I remained up in the bow, peering out into the darkness, till sufficiently sleepy to try my luck once more in the stuffy cabin. Greatly to my surprise I found it deliciously cool; our collision with the forest had accomplished in rather a rough and ready manner what the designer of the launch should have done in the way of ventilation years ago. The large hole which now existed allowed a free circulation of air and made the place habitable.

The incident put me in mind of a man I met in the mountains who had a home-made bath tub. One day a friend accidentally shot a hole in the bottom of it with a revolver, and when he apologised profusely for his carelessness, the owner remarked that the water had always run out very slowly, and for some time past he had been thinking of making another outlet, so really the bullet hole would come in quite handy.

At 8 a.m. we arrived at the confluence of the Huallaga and the Marañon—the name by which the Amazon is known in its passage through Peru. This remarkably interesting spot, locally

TRES UNIDOS

called Tres Unidos, filled me with unbounded wonder, and vividly impressed on me the immensity of this mammoth of waterways.

The vastness of the Amazon is hard enough to comprehend, let alone describe; here we were roughly 2,300 miles from the mouth and yet in places it was over a mile wide, and the green waters moved slowly forward with a display of quiet but overwhelming and irresistible force that was almost uncanny. It exhibits no sign of impatience, hurry, or disorder so often displayed by other rivers. The Amazon moves with the unrelenting certainty of time, sublime in the knowledge that nothing can impede its progress.

No better time of day than early morning could have been chosen to come upon such a place as this for the first time. Before the sun gets high in the heavens the shadows are pronounced, and the natural colour of the landscape appears brilliantly distinct; Nature, also, is always alive at this hour, and the early riser is well repaid for his trouble by the sights he sees. Great fish flashed in the sun, disturbing the quiet waters with their ponderous movements; *bufoes* rose to the surface to breathe, snorted, and lazily disappeared from view; thousands of aquatic birds infested the more shallow stretches, and even butterflies flitted across our bow, as if on their way to the opposite shore for a day's outing. Altogether it was a remarkable sight, and one that stirred me most profoundly.

For a moment we lay to, while Morey and his men transferred themselves and their belongings to the canoe that had been lashed alongside the *Adolfo*. Adrift on this tropical sea, they looked

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no larger than a chip of wood; and as, with a farewell hoot from our whistle, we steamed away, they paddled off to the nearest shore and were soon lost to view.

The day passed off uneventfully; once we pulled up at a wooding station to take on fuel, and on several occasions to sell some salt, or buy rubber from a lonely *sheringale*, who announced his presence on shore and his desire to barter by discharging a shot-gun in the air.

The captain seldom bought or sold anything for cash, but had a well-stocked shop on board, and traded with the natives to good advantage—in fact, he held his post as captain by virtue of his ability to trade, and not on account of his extensive knowledge of ships or fresh water navigation; the so-called *practico*, or pilot, looked after that side of the business. The captain set up many of these small settlers in business, providing them with the necessary tools, and then getting paid back in produce by instalments as their estates came into bearing. None of the men whom I saw seemed to have got very far ahead in the great struggle for existence, and it was only as we neared Iquitos that any signs of prosperity were encountered. To-day even these better estates are bankrupt on account of low prices, and *abandonado*, or abandoned, is a word only too frequently heard on all sides.

One might well ask what the future of the Upper Amazon is to be. Unless oil, of which I saw many indications, renews interest in this part of the world, large sections may revert to savagery, as for instance in the Upper Napo, where already the rubber gatherers have withdrawn, and the Indian

AN INDIAN SAYING

tribes who once occupied the territory have returned to their original haunts.

It is not unlikely that the increasing use of aeroplanes for commercial purposes in different parts of the globe will enable similar developments to take place in the Amazon. Rapid transportation is an essential factor, and if the country is to be opened up properly the intelligent use of flying-boats or hydro-aeroplanes would change the whole aspect of life, and make things possible which otherwise would be quite out of the question. The Murato Indians, whom I encountered in the Pastaza river later on, had a most curious saying, that "When the white man comes with wings they are going to die." There is something strangely interesting and pathetic in this simple statement, for when aerial transport is an accomplished fact in this part of the world the days of the Murato Indians will indeed be numbered.

The third day out was very much the same as those that preceded it. The river appeared slightly larger, and it was only when we were close to the banks that the size and variety of the forest growth could be appreciated. To me every stop was of interest, especially when it was possible to come close alongside, instead of anchoring out in deep water and sending a dinghy to the shore.

Turtles, rubber, and *chancaca* were the chief products we collected; at the same time enterprising members of the crew took advantage of the occasions when we were not moving to drop a hook and line over the stern. Although not always successful in their efforts, several large monsters resembling cat fish were hauled on

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board, which were devoured with relish by every one in preference to the dried and unpalatable fish called *paiche* that was served at each meal.

What struck me particularly about many of our stopping places was the great prominence some maps seemed to give to their names, whilst others, eminently important centres in comparison, were not mentioned at all. A careful study of my maps, both old and new, only added to my confusion, as judging from them the banks were sprinkled with innumerable villages and several good-sized towns. The owners of the launch also published a formidable list of eighty-one official stopping places along the route traversed, but let us see what happens to these on analysis. Only four or five boasted more than eight families, about seven had three, and the balance are but single habitations, which in a year or two will have sunk into oblivion. Inaccuracies in the delineation of the river itself are frequently obvious in every map, but this can be excused, as the channel is continuously shifting, and is never exactly the same two years running.

In the course of conversation with my travelling companions I tried to collect some data for my return trip to the Pacific coast. No one could supply first-hand information as to passing through the Pongo de Manseriche, but they seemed to think that the water was much too turbulent for a canoe, and it would be wiser not to try. The banks of the Upper Marañon, they said, were high, and not inundated in the rainy season; therefore it was a desirable country for settlers,

UNCERTAIN INFORMATION

but the Indians were the deterring influence which kept people away. It was a common trait with every one to whom I spoke to regard other places, outside of their own particular section of the river, as bad and inhabited by savages ready to murder the first man who set his foot on shore. I listened attentively to all that was told me, but found it hard to separate fact from fable ; one point, at any rate, was quite clear—that my return would entail considerable physical exertion and be highly interesting.

At 1.30 we stopped at the mouth of the Tigre river, a large stream on the north bank, rising in Ecuador, down which comes considerable rubber, *piasaba* fibre, and vegetable ivory. I took several photographs whenever anything interesting presented itself, but there was nothing to differentiate one spot from another, there being great similarity in the scenery. Water is water all the world over, even in mid-channel of an inland sea like the Amazon, so there was limited scope for the camera.

Contrary to my expectations, I did not wake up on the fourth day to find myself in Iquitos, but some distance up-stream instead. We had spent a large part of the night taking on a supply of firewood, and it was not until 7.30, as we were steaming due north, that we sighted the wireless station some distance away on our port bow. A huge island, that might well be mistaken for the mainland, hid the town from view, and *bogas* with rafts, coming down-stream for the first time, often pass by in the east channel, missing the place completely. The main river—at least,

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the widest portion of it—passes to the east of the island, whereas the deepest passage is to the west. We kept well over to the left, and as we approached it was surprising to see how wide the so-called narrow passage actually was.

On the west bank stood the great inland capital of Peru, 2,000 miles from the sea, yet the second largest port in the Republic, dumped down in the heart of the virgin forests, hundreds of miles from nowhere. From the launch a fine array of white buildings could be seen, in the construction of which bricks, marble, and tiles had been lavishly employed. Back of these again were the business streets and residential quarters. The landing-stage proved to be small, but substantially built, and could accommodate about four steamers simultaneously; it has a large floating pier moored alongside a structural steel jetty, and connected to it by a bridge. Three cranes hoist the baggage from the wharf and transfer it to the warehouse, on the same level as the jetty, which stands seventy feet above the level of the river in the dry season.

By 10.30 the *Adolfo* was safely berthed, and I was at liberty to stretch my legs on shore. For a full hour after our arrival the wharf presented a very animated scene, and it was apparent that trading was not the sole privilege of the captain. The entire ship's company had something or another to sell, whether it was turtles, sugar, or bananas—at any rate, all of those things that had been brought up river on speculation were now easily disposed of, at advances in price ranging anywhere from fifty to two hundred per cent.

CELEBRATING MY ARRIVAL

As there was no reason for me to hurry off to an hotel, I celebrated the successful termination of the first half of my journey by lunching in an appropriate manner with the captain. Thanks to his courtesy and good nature, the time spent on his launch had passed most agreeably, in spite of the small discomforts that characterised the start.

CHAPTER VIII

THE Malecon Palace, an ornate hotel badly built, yet constructed out of the most expensive materials possible, occupies a prominent position on the water-front of Iquitos, and is a typical monument to the times when Amazon rubber commanded a high price in the world's markets.

It was within its marble walls that I finally came to rest, exactly nine weeks and a day since I had turned my back on Pacasmayo and headed east over the jagged ridges of the Andes. Of this time only thirty-one days were actually spent on the move, the balance being lost in resting animals or arranging transport. Had I been disposed to continue right across the continent I could have embarked on a river steamer the following afternoon, which would have landed me in Para three or four weeks later. Pleasant as this would have been, my course lay west through the great barrier—the Pongo de Manseriche—whose mystic portals I was particularly anxious to explore on my way back to the Pacific coast.

Many and conflicting were the stories current concerning this place. Few people had been near it, and fewer still had ever passed through it. Beyond, the country was settled by Indians, Antipas and Aguarunas, both warlike tribes and

BAD REPORTS

unfriendly ; even the river had an evil reputation for cataracts and whirlpools, which rendered it unnavigable except for rafts that once in a while had ventured down it in the dry season. To travel up-stream in a light canoe under such adverse conditions was generally held to be impossible ; I was told that it was courting disaster to attempt it, but if my mind was made up to visit the locality at all costs, it would be wiser to return to Lima via the Pichis trail, go up the Peruvian coast to Paita, inland once more over the mountains, and then take the more sensible risk of descending the river on a strongly-built raft. For various reasons this latter course was not feasible, and after thinking the matter over I decided to penetrate as far as possible, and if insuperable difficulties intervened it would be time enough to return and take the easy route back to Lima.

Now, I had rather made up my mind to see the great Pongo and the land above it, cost what it might, so was not easily deterred by local rumours, no matter how disquieting. It was true that the passage of the rapids and whirlpools would be no child's play, but with care, and patience to wait a favourable opportunity, I figured that there should be no grave risk ; furthermore, it was possible to cope with the savages so long as one understood the savage nature. Taking everything into consideration, I decided on making the attempt, and forthwith threw myself heart and soul into the project.

In the detailed preparations for the adventurous journey ahead of me I was ably assisted by many of the community. Mr. Harrison, of the Booth Steamship Co., offered to relieve me of much

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unnecessary baggage, including the film and other photographs taken so far on my travels. Had it not been for his suggestion of forwarding it to England direct, I should probably have lost all of it later on when my canoe became entangled in a whirlpool. Mr. Sharpe and Mr. Harris, both of the Commercial Bank of Spanish America, took great pains in hunting up every one who would be of assistance, or who had any knowledge whatsoever of the country I was to traverse. The Editor of the leading newspaper in the town, *El Oriente*, was also enthusiastic in his support of the enterprise, and I had many pleasant chats with this very able man concerning various projects I had in mind.

Colonel Soyer y Caveno, the Prefect of the Department of Loreto, was another man whose courtesy and able assistance I had cause to be grateful for not many months later; he showed me his collection of maps, and gave me many valuable hints as to procedure when travelling in the river country. The colonel was one of those charming men of whom any country might be proud, intensely patriotic and interested in every effort, no matter how small, that might bring Peru to the fore. He put himself to a great deal of trouble on my account, and arranged that I should travel on the Government launch, *Cahuapanas*, which was leaving within a few days for Barranca, on the Marañon, where a small military outpost was quartered. I was very thankful for this courtesy, as it would relieve me of two or three weeks' tedious work up river in a canoe, a large portion of which I had already traversed in the *Adolfo*.

IQUITOS

What with developing photographs, preparing my gear for the journey, and the many social relaxations to which I was treated, time passed all too quickly. When the day came to set out I felt almost like one leaving his home town, rather than a strange city which I had only set eyes on for the first time a week previously.

A good deal could be written about this very interesting place and its inhabitants, but there is no need to go over ground which other writers have done full justice to. Even the Amazon has come in for its full share of comment, but a few figures are worth giving, as they are more illuminating than general statements as to its great size, such as I have indulged in so far.

Few people realise that prior to the war ocean-going steamers of 3,000 tons sailed regularly from Liverpool direct to Iquitos. On entering the Amazon delta the pilot was usually taken on at Salinas, 110 miles from Para. From thence to Manaus the distance is 865 miles, and from Manaus to Iquitos 1,172 miles; this then places Iquitos at the great distance of 2,147 English miles from the open sea. At this remote point the river is over three kilometres wide from bank to bank, inclusive of an island in the centre; the narrow channel on the west of the island is 850 metres across, and the wide channel on the east side is 1,700 metres broad. In the rainy season the river rises as much as forty feet, and the maximum depth of the main channel may reach seventy feet or even more.

A peculiarity not often mentioned is the enormous amount of solid matter that gets swept along the

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river bed, and is very troublesome at times to heavy draught steamers. In the dry season careful soundings are usually made all round the pier at Iquitos prior to the arrival of a large ship. On one such occasion twenty feet of water was registered, but when the ship arrived a few hours later it went aground in ten feet of water. Next day, when every one was wondering what was the best thing to do, the obstruction was swept away by the force of the current, and the ship once more floated. Renewed soundings showed thirty feet clear on all sides, in spite of the fact that no new rise had set in since the original soundings were made.

Saturday, August 10th, the day fixed for my departure, finally arrived. At 5 p.m. I walked down to the wharf in company with some friends, and boarded the Government launch, *Cahuapanas*, which was lying alongside.

The visions of a quiet journey in which I had allowed myself to indulge soon vanished; the greatest confusion and hubbub imaginable existed; men swarmed over the decks and clustered around the rails like bees, singing and shouting as if off on a holiday, while others, more energetically inclined, assisted in stowing away the remaining cargo, which included some large smelly bundles of dried fish.

Amongst this unsavoury collection of freight and humanity I forced my way to the upper deck, the lines were cast off, and we drifted rapidly from the shore; across the widening gap I managed to catch the last remarks of those who had come to see me off, to the effect that the next time they saw my head they supposed the Indians would

ONCE MORE ON THE MOVE

have reduced it to the size of an orange ; then the whistle blew violently, and we started to grind our way up river. So slowly did we move that the banks seemed almost motionless ; however, we had started, and, after all, that was the most important thing.

Given time, it is generally possible to adapt oneself to almost any surroundings without much difficulty, but it did not take long to realise that I had my work cut out for me if life on board the Government launch was to be made anything less than prolonged agony. My perspective had, no doubt, been seriously distorted by the splendour of the Malecon Palace ; however, be that as it may, my dreams were not of marble halls, but of the good ship *Adolfo*, which in comparison persisted in my memory as a palatial yacht of great magnificence, upon whose ample deck I had lazed away several days in luxury.

The *Cahuapanas* was of the usual double-decked design, twenty-three years old, very small, and with no privacy of any description whatsoever ; of its seaworthiness it is unnecessary to speak, beyond saying that the captain ordered my few miserable packages down to the lower deck for fear that so much extra weight on the upper one might cause us to turn turtle. When I ventured to remark that such a thing was hardly possible, he replied briefly that it had already done so once. After spending eighteen whole days on board I wondered it had not done so more often, for it was certainly the most unwieldy and top-heavy contraption ever built. Alongside of us a lighter was securely lashed, almost as large as the launch

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itself, and so long as we did not part company our equilibrium was fairly good, even if our speed suffered somewhat. On one occasion we were obliged to navigate alone, with the result that we rolled and swayed in a manner not altogether pleasant.

A small amount of gear was stowed away on board the lighter, but the deck space was chiefly given over to human cargo, which littered it from stem to stern. Seeing that the captain was not disposed to be communicative, I tried the engineer, with better results. He informed me that the Government maintained sundry remote military garrisons on the various rivers, and each year this launch made the rounds with provisions and a new lot of soldiers to replace those whose year of outpost duty had come to an end. All of the men on the launch, bar the crew and three or four others, constituted the relief party, and would be left at the various stations as we called upon them in rotation. There were also many women amongst the party, who did not wish to be separated from their husbands during their twelve months' exile in the forest.

Not all of the men were enthusiastic at the prospects before them; some of them were decidedly melancholy, and one poor fellow committed suicide rather than face the loneliness of life in the wilds. He had sat in the stern of the lighter day after day, brooding on the dismal future ahead, till one afternoon, feeling particularly disconsolate, he dropped overboard, and was devoured by the crocodiles before any assistance could be given. On the whole, these soldiers



THE OUTLET FROM LAKE RIMACHIUMA.

CRAMPED QUARTERS

were of very mixed blood, a sturdy lot and quite pleasant characters ; nevertheless, they were excellent material, from which a fighting force could be made that would give good account of itself if well led.

I could not find out how many there were of us all told ; some said seventy-five, others ninety-five ; in any event, we could not have crowded more on board, as there was practically no room to move about as it was. At night things were worse than by day, as the human animal takes up more room lying down than he does standing up. Some hammocks were slung as high as possible, so as to allow other hammocks to be slung beneath them again ; the rest of us were huddled on deck as best we could, wedged in so tightly that when once every one was in his proper place it was impossible to get up without disturbing everybody. Those whose ambitions soared to hammocks were the first to retire, and those more humble, who occupied the deck, were last. At six in the morning we got up in the reverse order, and when the deck had been cleared a table was let down from the roof and secured to the deck ; upon it were served the various meals, such as they were—rice, beans, and bananas.

For two weary days we struggled against the current, laboriously fighting our way inch by inch, and keeping as close to the shore as practicable, so as to avoid the swift current, which was usually more pronounced in the middle of the river. Twice we stopped for fuel, and once on signal from the bank by a man whose wife had been bitten by a snake and was in a dying condition. The captain

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

reluctantly handed out some remedy to the husband, who came out in his canoe. We then continued up-stream. I have often wondered what happened to the woman.

At 5 p.m. on the second day, after a prolonged period of stifling heat, a slight head-wind sprung up that put new life into our wilting bodies. Being at the mouth of the River Tigre, we ascended it for a short distance, and made fast for the night, ready to send a landing party on shore in the early morning for firewood. In mid-stream we had been spared the ravages of the mosquitoes, but now that we were motionless close to the bank it meant one more item to add to our long list of troubles.

It must be admitted that when once the first spasm of delight produced by the sight of these great waterways and the luxuriant vegetation surrounding them has worn off it leaves an aching void difficult to fill. The ever-present forest has a depressing influence that is more pronounced than that produced by the boundless snow-capped peaks of the Sierra. Then, again, the average settler is listless and lifeless, like the atmosphere he lives in. The banks of the rivers give no impression of permanency or solidity either ; they are shelving mud, irregular, and for ever changing. Slides continually take place, great trees whose roots have been undermined sway and totter, then finally crash earthward and get swept away by the ravenous swirl of waters which slowly but surely have been bringing about their destruction.

■ In the flood season the water is over the banks, and ■ settlers—if there are any—must keep to the high ground, as huge areas are inundated for

TAKING ON FUEL

months at a time ; then comes the dry season—more correctly called the “less wet season”—the waters withdraw and the river drops rapidly, sometimes as much as a foot a day. Navigation becomes difficult, and the launches are apt to get stuck in the mud. The would-be settler takes advantage of the dry weather to clear a patch of ground and plant his yucas or bananas, only to have the next wet season come along, and likely as not drown the whole place out, forcing him to abandon his post or starve.

Fish in the river are plentiful, but in the flood season hard to catch, even with nets. The water brings down so much food that they are not tempted by any doubtful bait, no matter how succulent a morsel it may be. Thus life goes on, conditions oscillating between two extremes, both bad, the happy medium seldom lasting long. Is it to be wondered at that beneath it all a strong under-current of depression and melancholy should be found ?

The operation of hewing trees and splitting the wood into suitable lengths for burning in the furnaces occupied an entire morning ; twenty men were engaged on the task. The two woods usually selected are known as *quintilla* and *capiroa* ; the latter is the more common, and is a singularly fine tree, with a long, slender, green and chocolate trunk, usually free from parasitic growth. In common with one or two others it has the peculiarity of holding just sufficient moisture to retard its rapid consumption in the fire-box, and yet not enough to prevent its immediate use, as would be the case with any other green wood. The

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grain is straight and splits nicely with axe or wedge.

By way of diversion I tried my hand at fishing ; two or three times I fancied a big fellow was on the end of the line ; but after several hooks had been lost in attempting to haul in the monster, I discovered it was only a submerged log that I had been angling for, which, when wriggling in the current, put up a very fair imitation of a large fish. I then changed my tactics, without any better results ; innumerable small fry nibbled round the bait, but they would not swallow it whole, as any decent-minded fish should have done ; so I packed up and devoted my attention to watching birds instead.

Our excursion up the Tigre river to Puerto Fuentes, the Government outpost, and back to the Marañon, occupied five days in all. It was a pleasant experience, for the reason that the river was in flood, and, the channel being fairly narrow, we could see a good deal of the banks, and even get an occasional glimpse of animal or bird life thereon. Macaws and various parrots could be counted by the hundreds any morning or evening, as they flew overhead uttering their harsh cries ; grey herons and graceful egrets were also plentiful, and once in a while a solitary tapir, whom we would come upon by surprise, would bolt off into the brush. One evening interest was centred for a few minutes on a party of monkeys as they went swinging along from branch to branch, all following exactly the same route, just as if some clearly defined trail existed in the tree tops.

The Tigre is supposed to be fairly well settled, but there were not many evidences of it. We

A MILITARY OUTPOST

stopped at one small estate inhabited by a genial old man who had eighty-two children to his credit, all alive and well, according to report ; how many wives he had no one knew, and the old fellow himself seemed a little hazy on this point. If his family were to be taken as a standard, the banks of the Tigre would have been well populated indeed, but outside of our few stopping places signs of life were few and far between.

Puerto Fuentes was only a couple of well-built shanties, where we dropped off five soldiers and took four away, the fifth having died of fever during his year's service. For curiosity's sake I left a letter behind addressed to England, with instructions that it should be forwarded to Iquitos by the first canoe going down-stream after we left. It reached its destination five months later, not very rapid travelling, considering that this place is not a remote spot by any means.

The names given by settlers to their little clearings interested me not a little ; one in particular, christened Berlin, I had cause to remember, as the captain, who was very anti-English and always ready to make himself objectionable, thought it a good opportunity to say something for my discomfiture. When the launch was secured to the bank he came over, saying—" I suppose the *señor* wonders why this place is called Berlin ? " " Not in the least," I answered promptly, " because it is obvious ; it is the only place where we have seen any swine "—and so it was, for the owner had quite a large herd of pigs grubbing about close at hand.

The most appropriately named of all these places was Esperanza, or " Hope "—just four posts and

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

a roof, in the centre of a small clearing ; two banana trees, a few yuca plants, and the owner completed the picture. I think it would have been difficult to have found any other single word in the English language that could have better described the scene. Vista Alegre, or "Cheerful View," was the name of another doleful place, evidently the home of an optimist.

Back once more in the Marañon, we pushed up-stream late at night, with the stars shining overhead and a clear horizon. The next morning it was raining heavily ; for an hour we remained stuck on a sand-bank, and then, as firewood was running low, we stopped at five o'clock where there was a fine group of *capiroña* trees, to cut our own supply. Instead of laying in a good stock while we had the chance, we took on only enough to last us four hours, and then set out again in the hopes of getting more further on.

The evening proved fine, and the sky was a remarkable sight ; on either side of us rose huge battlements of blue-grey clouds, looking for all the world like towering ranges of gigantic mountains ; between these two awe-inspiring pillars the sun sank into a well of crimson fire, beckoning us to follow it into the peaceful land of dreams.

There were to be no dreams for us that night, however ; when we again set out the clouds closed like a vice, and we were overwhelmed in a blanket of darkness which even a nearly full moon could not penetrate. Soon the rain was falling, and the wind blowing with such violence that the side curtains of the upper deck could not be lowered for fear of our capsizing. There was nothing to

A RAINY NIGHT

do but stand in the open and get well drenched, till conditions became so bad that we were forced to seek shelter along the bank. Here we waited in patience for the storm to subside ; the side curtains, meanwhile, had been hung up in place, and we unfortunate passengers lay down on the wet deck in the vain hope of sleeping.

Two hours had barely elapsed before the captain was for making a move to the usual mythical place—*mas ariba* (higher up)—where we would find plenty of wood. The side curtains were consequently removed at the very moment when I had gone to sleep, and I woke to find myself nearly blown overboard. Without expressing my feelings out loud, I spread my waterproof over me and waited.

On we struggled against a fearful current. After an hour we had not advanced a mile up-stream, and our last stick of wood had been thrown into the furnace. Now, there was the only alternative of tying up for the night, and, as might be expected, we ran on to the mud in trying to get near the shore. In vain we tried to get off, but our last ounce of steam was expended, and the crew were well exhausted, so we gave up the attempt and waited for morning.

Incomprehensible as it may seem, the night was very cold ; it did not worry me very much, seeing that I was fresh from the mountains, but the natives found it almost unbearable, and went about huddled up in blankets, or anything in the way of a covering that they could possibly find. It seemed odd, indeed, to feel chilly when only five degrees south of the Equator.

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

When morning broke the bad judgment of some one was painfully apparent; we were well lodged on the mud, the fires were out, and the nearest *capiroa* tree was half a mile away. It was the soldiers that came to the rescue; one lot stripped and got into the shallow water to shove and haul, while another lot, remaining on board, rushed simultaneously from one side of the launch to the other, rocking it to and fro, till the combined efforts of both caused us to edge off into deeper water.

A third party went up-stream in a canoe and started felling trees and splitting the wood to the right size for consumption in the boiler fire. A small supply was then brought back which was just sufficient to raise enough steam to take us up river to where the men were at work. By two o'clock a good stock of fuel had been laid in, and we were off again against an ever-increasing current.

Some northern tributary must have been in flood, as much debris was drifting down the stream, and the high waters almost covered the naked banks. Floods such as this, occurring in the middle of the dry season, caused considerable confusion in my mind, until I had a more complete grasp of the climatic conditions all over this vast country along the base of the Andes, where so many affluents of the Amazon have their origin. If the period of high water in all of these occurred simultaneously, then large areas of forest country would be inundated most of the year, if not permanently. As it is, those coming down from Ecuador from the north are high when the other group of tributaries coming from Peru to the south

THE RAINY SEASONS

are low. It is obvious that if each of these two groups carried the same amount of water, and if their seasons were diametrically opposed, the flow of water in the Amazon itself would be exactly equalised all through the year, but Nature has arranged it differently. The four months' dry season in the northern group follows immediately after the four months' dry season in the southern group ; furthermore, the southern group carries much more water than the northern group, with the result that the Amazon does show a distinct low water period.

The southern group, consisting of the Huallaga and Ucayali, are inclined to be low in the months of June, July, August, and September. The northern group, consisting of the Morona, Pastaza, Tigre, and Napo, experience low water in the months of October, November, December, and January. The time of the year when the river at Iquitos is at its highest is between February and May, and lowest between June and September. Outside of these general variations mentioned, it must be remembered that each tributary has its own minor sub-variations peculiar to itself, and other rivers, such as the Santiago, are liable to flood at all seasons of the year.

From the foregoing remarks it will be evident that there is much room for confusion, but, practically speaking, if the traveller in any section of the river country wants to be sure of the best weather conditions, it is well to avoid the months of February, March, April, and May.

The continuation of our journey, as far as the mouth of the Pastaza, proved a repetition of all

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

the evils we had experienced to date, with the exception that never once did we run aground ; the river was high, and for a change navigation was easy.

One evening, after we had passed Tres Unidos, we came upon an unusually interesting section of the forest, in which almost every tree had been snapped off about ten feet from the ground. It was evidently the path of a colossal hurricane, which had swept by not many days previously, mowing down everything that stood in its way like so much grass. One or two *capiróna* trees of great size had withstood the onslaught of the tempest, and their graceful trunks were picturesquely silhouetted against the crimson sky, surveying the scene of destruction with peaceful calm.

As I stood up in the bow of the launch, viewing the havoc wrought by the storm and the vast expanse of forest which had been laid bare, I felt very far away from every one and everything—everything except Nature, and she, of course, is the persistent companion of anyone who travels. She is not always an agreeable companion either ; she can be beautiful, awe-inspiring, ferocious, and restful, all within a very short time. This evening, her lust for destruction satiated, she was full of repose, and invited confidences.

On arriving at the mouth of the Pastaza we continued past it for a mile or so to a hut on the north bank called Patria. Here we unlashd the lighter that retarded our progress, and put on shore much of the cargo and all the soldiers who were not bound for the Government outpost, Puerto Alayza, at the juncture of the Huasaga and Pastaza rivers. Relieved of all this unnecessary impedimenta

START UP THE PASTAZA

we went flying back down-stream once more to the mouth of the Pastaza, and started on our journey up it. For three hours we oscillated from side to side of the east channel, getting off one sand-bar, only to get stuck on another. Finally, we gave it up and returned to the Marañon, where we essayed the west channel instead, which proved more satisfactory. It was 6 p.m. when we made our new start, but in half an hour we were once more on the mud and unable to get off until the moon rose and threw a little light on the scene.

The Pastaza is a shallow river at the best of times, especially in its lower reaches, where it is splayed out over a wide and rambling course with sundry *brazos*, or arms, branching away from it, and joining up with the main channel again many miles further on. We followed one of these for almost two days into a small lagoon, which was the main outlet from a very large lake known as Rimachiuma. On our return we spent some little time here exploring the labyrinth of canals and back channels which twisted through the forest in all directions without rhyme or reason.

A tribe of Indians, known as Muratos, occupy this section of the country, and I was lucky to come in contact with a number of them. I will, however, speak of their customs later on, when the subject of savages is dealt with in more detail. It was they who had the saying concerning the white man coming with wings, so they were particularly interesting to me. Amongst other things we came across some very curious remains during our explorations, which would, no doubt, be worth independent study at a future date.

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

The navigation of these side channels was extremely agreeable, as the water was clean and deep, but back in the main river progress once more became very precarious.

Since leaving Iquitos rice and beans—with an occasional slab of dried fish—had been our only food ; a welcome change was now in store for us, distributed over the wide sand-bars that reverberated in the heat of the noonday sun. These miniature Saharas were covered with the tracks of turtles, who, most indiscreetly, had chosen the previous night of all nights to leave the river and lay their eggs in the soft sand. It was an opportunity that hungry humans were not going to let slip, and we made a raid on the nests, collecting eggs by the thousand, till the deck of the launch was fairly littered with them.

Yet another acceptable and unexpected addition to our larder was a small brown deer, which was caught alive whilst swimming across the river. With good tender meat for a couple of days, and as many tasty turtles' eggs as we could eat, our appetites for once in a way were well satisfied. Not so that of the boiler fire ; there seemed no end to the amount of fuel it could consume. As often as twice a day we would send a party on shore to hack and hew at the unfortunate *capirona* trees to be stuffed into its rapacious maw.

I took advantage on these occasions to make little excursions on shore ; the forest was not always very dense, but for all that one had to be careful not to get too far afield for fear of getting lost, an easy matter even with a compass. On one of these walks I was standing motionless, watching

LIFE AT AN OUTPOST

some butterflies, when an *armadillo* came scrambling along through the brush straight towards me. He was a funny-looking fellow—great, bat-like ears and a squarish snout ; he came close up, and as I was about to make a grab for him, I accidentally sneezed violently and he was off like lightning. These animals are reputed to be very blind, but evidently it does not prevent their running very fast.

The garrison at Puerto Alayza had suffered a few casualties during the year as the result of accidents, but it was a healthy climate, and fever had not taken its toll as it was apt to do in some of the other stations. It was not always sickness that the soldiers dreaded most ; Indians sometimes were more to be feared. On the Morona river some years back they had sprung a surprise attack on the garrison, which had been entirely wiped out, with the exception of one man, who got away down river bearing news of the disaster. Not infrequently the men told off for the monotonous life of outpost duty set out with some enthusiasm at the prospect of developing the station and doing a little in the way of agriculture, but their ardour does not always endure. After the launch has left, some one suddenly discovers that several important implements have been left behind, and as these cannot be secured until the next year when the launch returns, none of the ground is cleared or planted, as was originally intended, and the men return to Iquitos at the end of their period of enforced idleness completely demoralised.

The night before we started back to the Marañon was one of the worst which we put in during the entire voyage. It was the old story of mosquitoes,

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

who were the bane of our existence. During the afternoon a steady downpour had set in, which did not let up till six ; then every suggestion of a breeze subsided, and the suffocating heat returned, bringing swarms of mosquitoes with teeth ready-sharpened for the fray. I sought cover under my net without delay, perspiring freely, but out of reach of their venomous bites. Others less fortunate were eaten alive ; no one slept, and even I could not do so soundly, by reason of the heat and the noises going on about me.

At three my cramped position became unbearable, and thinking it safe I got up to stretch outside the net. Immediately I was set upon, and quickly crawled back to safety, only to have some of the more enterprising mosquitoes follow me, and the rest of the night was spent in trying to catch them. With the first ray of dawn the enemy, having feasted well on our blood, vanished into the dark recesses of the forest, and we unfortunate mortals, complaining vehemently, sought such consolation as we could find in a cup of filthy black coffee and a dried banana.

The captain must have put in a bad night, like the rest of us, as we set out on our return downstream with reckless abandon. Within an hour we had run aground twice, nearly upsetting each time, then we crashed into the trees on the bank, bringing down millions of black ants on our deck, which were the devil to get rid of. Clear of the branches, we went sliding and skating at full speed over logs, sand, and mud, oscillating and swaying to and fro in a way that foretold disaster sooner or later.

At noon we were not only firmly aground, but

MURATO INDIANS

across the current, with the sand piling up alongside of us till the water on the up-stream side was only a matter of inches deep. So alarmed were we at the prospect of remaining there a month or two, that every one got into the water and worked frantically to free us from the sand, that before long would have turned us completely over on our side. It was a successful effort on our part, lasting four hours, which put our 42 h.p. engine to shame. My only concern was that the captain should get over-confident of our prowess, and land us in a still worse predicament later on; to the great relief of every one, his ardour cooled off and we proceeded more cautiously.

Our passage back through the narrow canals leading by Lake Rimachiuma left an indelible impression on my memory, and a strong desire to return some day in the future to see more of the place and the Murato Indians who lived there. They seemed a friendly and cheerful lot of people, healthy, and expert hunters, both with the spear and blow-gun. All the spears were provided with hardwood points that could penetrate pretty well anything, but one man had a metal point of which he was very proud. To me it looked like some ancient weapon that might have been taken from the early Spaniards and handed down from generation to generation.

Although I was beginning to get impatient to start on the real part of my journey, I was sorry when this particular section of the trip had been left behind. We passed out along the last canal late one afternoon—tall trees, close up to the water's edge, forming a veritable cañon of foliage, which

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in places was matted, twisted, and entwined into an almost solid mass of green. Between these walls we moved without effort or hindrance of any kind ; the exotic perfumes of the forest broke upon us in periodic waves that charmed the senses to the point of intoxication. A few small monkeys cut capers in the tree tops as if for our special edification, the channel being so narrow that we could take in every detail of their movements, and even distinguish the plumage of occasional birds resting in the branches of the more conspicuous trees.

At one of the bends a small clean bar of white sand suggested an enchanted glen, where the fairies of the forest might come to dance in the moonlight ; but what was that mark, as if a log of wood had been drawn across it ?—a revolting shudder ran down my spine at the thought of it—the track of the *anaconda*, that repulsive reptile of the swamps, was unmistakable, and hinted at the terrible aspect of life which lurked beneath such beautiful surroundings.

When we got back to the Marañon and scanned its green waters I could hardly believe it was the same river ; the heart seemed to have gone out of it. No longer in flood, it was displaying ungainly muddy banks, strewn with debris ; the current was lifeless, and as we swerved round into it and pushed our nose up-stream, it offered very little opposition to our progress.

At Patria we secured the lighter alongside once more, took on our full cargo, likewise the soldiers, whom we had left to fend for themselves during our absence, and set out for Barranca, where I



A YOUNG MARRIED COUPLE FROM THE PASTAZA RIVER.

A CLOSE CALL

was looking forward to arrange other means of transporting me further westward to the great barrier—the Pongo de Manseriche.

Three hours' steaming brought us to San Lorenzo, a prosperous looking settlement on a large bend of the river. We stopped a mile beyond it, where one Sr. Agosto Morales had his *chacra*, and, amongst other things, two thousand sticks of firewood piled up neatly waiting our pleasure.

When all this load had been stowed away on board the launch the skipper gave a final demonstration of his supreme ignorance in handling river craft. A storm was coming up, we were heavily loaded, the river was low, the *practico*, or pilot, was not conversant with the channel, and it was black as Egypt's night. The combination did not daunt our gallant commander, and within a short time we came to a full stop, with a sudden jar that sent everything on deck flying. This time it was not mud or sand, but solid rock, upon which we were firmly lodged. There was no rest for anyone that night; the river was dropping, and unless we got free before it sank much lower the launch might have been completely wrecked.

In the dim light of a few lanterns and in a dripping rain we transferred the cargo on shore; after this, the firewood, which it had just taken us over an hour to take on, had all to be put off again, everything being transported to the bank by means of one solitary canoe. When this had been accomplished the lighter was cast adrift so that the launch would be as buoyant as possible. Everything ready, we went full steam astern, backed off, and slid gracefully on to a mud bank, which meant

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another hour's work before we were free to move again.

By this time the moon had risen, wood and cargo were all laboriously returned to the launch, and we continued on our way up-stream. In four hours we were moored safely at our destination, Barranca, under the lee of a high bank, and I was at liberty to go on shore whenever it suited me.

CHAPTER IX

A SHRILL whistle of farewell reverberated through the morning air as the Government launch *Cahuapanas* slowly disappeared from view round a bend in the river, leaving me a solitary figure on the muddy banks of the Marañon, to continue my journey westward as best I could.

So far so good. I was at Barranca, three hundred miles nearer the Pacific coast than I had been eighteen and a half days ago when I set out from Iquitos, but there were still five hundred long miles to go. What concerned me at the moment was not the five hundred miles so much as the exact whereabouts of Barranca itself, which I had been given to understand was a large place, where a canoe could be chartered to carry me still further forward into the unknown.

From my elevated position no suggestion of a habitation showed itself amongst the low bushes or dense forest that stretched away indefinitely as far as the eye could see. The six soldiers who landed with me had long since been spirited off into the jungle by their friends who came to meet them, and it therefore behoved me, if I did not want to lose too much time, to shoulder one of my own bundles and follow the path they had taken.

Ten minutes' walk brought me to some high

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ground, and there, in the centre of a very extensive clearing, was a group of houses. The nearest was larger than the rest and stood apart by itself ; in front the owner sat enjoying his early coffee. " Good morning, *señor*," I said, plunging into conversation. " Can you tell me the name of this beautiful place ? " and I waved my hand towards the row of huts as if it were some new tree I was enquiring about.

He looked rather surprised, but replied politely that it was the great and important settlement of Barranca, and then added hesitatingly, " The *señor* is German ? "

" No, fortunately not," I answered. " I am English, and I would like to get men and a canoe to take me up river." Remembering a letter given me by my friend Colonel Soyer, I fumbled in my pocket for it and handed it to the stranger, so as to avoid further embarrassing questions. The document set forth the objects of my journey in eloquent Spanish, and called upon all good Peruvians to assist me in every way possible.

Having read it through carefully he handed it back, duly impressed, exclaiming, "*Caramba!* that will indeed be a difficult journey." He then got up, shook hands, and introduced himself—" Eraclito Muñoz, at your service, *señor*. Maybe I can help you ; please do me the favour to take a seat." This sounded like business, so I sat down while Don Eraclito gulped off his remaining coffee, and looked up into space, as if seeking inspiration from the white clouds that drifted by.

He remained in silence for some minutes, till I remarked that price was of no great consequence

A MAN WITH BRAINS

so long as arrangements could be made promptly ; the sooner I left, the more I would be willing to pay. This evidently threw a new light on the subject, for within half an hour satisfactory terms had been arranged, Don Eraclito himself agreeing to accompany me all the way to Bellavista, provide the canoe, and three *bogas* to handle it.

I derived considerable satisfaction from my preliminary dealings with this man ; he acted as one who was conscious of being alive and having a head on his shoulders. We were to leave in two days' time, and meanwhile his house was to be my house. It all seemed too good to be true. He even knew the Pongo de Manseriche well, to say nothing of being thoroughly conversant with the language of the various Indians whom we would fall in with.

Since the matter was now disposed of in such an eminently satisfactory manner, there remained nothing for me to worry about. I collected my belongings from the river bank, and leisurely unpacked everything for minute inspection. My cameras needed careful overhauling, and my stock of provisions had to be examined to see that they had not suffered any damage during the past weeks. Unfortunately, all the rice had fermented and was useless ; several tins of meat were broken and had to be discarded ; moisture had soaked through into my clothing, covering it with mildew, which had all to be washed off, resulting in every minute of my time being fully occupied.

Comment has already been made on the fact that Barranca stood some distance away from the river ; this was not the original intention of those

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who built it, but the result of a little freak on the part of the river ; one day it had decided to change its course, and consequently left the village behind. Such things are constantly happening in this strange country, where such a word as "permanent" is unknown. Barranca had just reason to be pleased that the river had not moved in the opposite direction, as when once the green waters decide to move a certain way nothing will stop them. What with the forest for ever encroaching in the rear, and the river eating away the land in front, the life of a poor settler on the banks is, to say the least, precarious.

I had no desire to revert to the life on board the *Cahuapanas*, which, in the end, had been made very pleasant, thanks to the engineer, Lieut. Alfredo Rivarola, and Col. J. Ignacio Tuccio, who was in charge of the troops. In spite of the discomfort of being crowded on deck like so many cattle, I have always felt very grateful to Col. Soyer, who arranged the trip for me ; I had seen some extraordinary sights and witnessed a phase of Amazon life which it is not every one's privilege to come in contact with.

For the time being the past was passed, and I lived in anticipation of a new chapter of experiences which was to come. Camp life had always the greatest fascination for me, especially when the weather was good, and there were prospects of seeing something new and interesting. To penetrate a little-known part of the world where lived a tribe of Indians who resented the intrusion of white men was surely something to look forward to, and I had every reason to be thankful for the satisfactory turn events had taken.

A FINAL CELEBRATION

Two good nights' rest in Don Eraclito's house, undisturbed by the close proximity of many hammocks, put me in fine fettle for the journey. The very morning of our departure the *gobenador*—a man about six feet tall and as thin as a piece of string—seemed anxious to create difficulties; just why I could not understand, unless I had been guilty of some breach of etiquette which had ruffled his feathers. A personal visit smoothed things over nicely. Evidently the invaluable papers prepared by Col. Soyer and bearing the seal of the Peruvian Government carried weight, for whatever the trouble was it soon disappeared, and a *copita* all round put everybody in an amicable frame of mind.

As a final celebration we went to the military garrison, where we were banqueted by M. Abelado Frias y Valle, a young man in command of the post, who was putting in his term of military service far away from his native town of Lima, where all his family lived. He seemed to think I would have many spare moments during my journey, and insisted on my taking a Spanish edition of "The Hound of the Baskervilles," by Conan Doyle, to read. I did not refuse it, but I laughed to myself at the very thought of having nothing to do; little did I realise that it was to be the only thing that stood between me and madness during some of the long days that were to come, and that before I got back to civilisation I would have read it through from cover to cover fifteen times.

At 3.20 a small group of men had collected at the edge of the river to bid us farewell. Don Eraclito and myself, with the three *bogas*, boarded

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the short but rather wide canoe awaiting us, and after many healths had been drunk the journey began.

We dilly-dallied all the way up to Estrella. Talk—the result of excessive feasting—seemed to come more easily than work ; in consequence, the men never got down to real business till the following day, when the effect of their indiscretion had worn itself out.

Estrella is a small habitation occupied by a man called Juan J. Vasquez, and I was particularly fortunate to find that he had returned from the expedition which Marco Morey had told me about on board the launch *Adolfo*. The party had travelled up a branch of the River Potro called Aycha Yacu, or “meat river,” for six days in their canoe and two days on foot, but as the Indians did not prove friendly, they decided to abandon the project, and send another expedition—“*mañana*”—up the Rio Cahuapanas. Morey, who was supposed to be in charge of the expedition, directed it in comfort from San Lorenzo, a settlement which we had passed the evening before reaching Barranca.

Since leaving Iquitos the banks of the Marañon had been composed of nothing but mud. Below Barranca they had shown signs of a more solid texture, and were inclined to be vertical rather than sloping. Here, at Estrella, I saw fine gravel-bars for the first time, which indicated that the character of the river was about to change.

After supper I chatted with my host, and plied him with all manner of questions concerning the Pongo, as I had been told he was a veritable well of information. If so, he was not a very deep one,



A SMALL SETTLEMENT AND A BIG TREE.

A FUNERAL FOR ENTERTAINMENT

because I was unable to get any data from him whatsoever.

A little air of gaiety prevailed during the evening, by reason of a funeral ceremony which was in full swing, over the corpse of some unfortunate individual who had been drowned in the river. In places such as this there are no distractions of any kind, and the community is not sufficiently large to provide funerals very often by way of entertainment ; hence, when they do occur, it is quite an event. The festivities were only participated in by the women and one man, who assumed the rôle of priest for the occasion. The ceremony lasted till three o'clock in the morning, and seemed to afford much enjoyment to all those who took part in it. I slept out of doors in the fresh air, so as not to be disturbed by the noisy demonstrations of the mourners.

With the prospect of further liquid refreshment, it was no easy task to get my men on the move again the following morning. When we did finally pull away from the shore, at the late hour of 9.30 a.m., I had the satisfaction of knowing that but for one habitation at Limon we would not see any more settlers till we set foot in Bellavista, two hundred and fifty miles away. The day passed off uneventfully ; at four o'clock we were opposite the east mouth of the Rio Potro. There is an island here forming a delta, but the west channel is very small and might easily be passed by unnoticed.

The evening was well advanced before we pitched our camp after a strenuous day. The small sand-flies had been unusually plentiful, and although we were relieved of their company at six o'clock, it

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was only to leave the coast clear for their more venomous allies, the mosquitoes, who launched their attack at 6.30 sharp. I smeared myself with vaseline in a futile attempt to ward them off, but it was of no avail, and I sought refuge under my net before the evening meal had been prepared. Comfortably installed and divested of my clothes, I lay down—hungry, to be sure, but in peace, while clouds of insects shrieked outside in disappointment.

Travelling without a net would be impossible to the ordinary mortal ; it is the most important item of one's baggage, as essential as food itself. It should be a fine mesh for preference, or, better still, a semi-transparent fabric, as that will keep off the minute flies during the day, which bite viciously and pass through ordinary netting like an open window.

The dew precipitated in the early hours of the morning was phenomenal, making it quite impossible to keep our belongings dry. The only remedy was to break camp early at 5 a.m., and stop for breakfast after three hours' work, spreading the most important things out in the sun, if it were shining. Anything that would not dry out was dumped back in the canoe, and had to take its chance as best it could during the day. The camera and films were protected from the rain with several coverings of palm leaves woven together into a solid mat. This had the additional advantage of keeping things cool underneath it, no matter how hot the sun was overhead.

The mouth of the Morona was passed safely. It is a fine river, flowing down from the north in a well-defined manner, with a more healthy and more

SQUIRMING ALONG THE BANKS

interesting look about it than any I had yet seen. Had time been no object nothing would have pleased me better than to have made a side trip up it.

Like yesterday, we had to persistently fight our way against the current, which in some places was so powerful that I had to assist the men by working vigorously myself ; however, by sneaking along close to the shore and skirting round sand-bars, we managed to make our way ahead slowly but surely. Don Eraclito was the only one who did not work ; he sat complacently in the stern, and discoursed at length on general topics for the edification of all of us.

The early mornings were generally overcast, but by noon the sun would be shining with full vigour. In the intense heat we would navigate around innumerable pieces of semi-submerged timbers, a swift current not only impeding our progress, but putting us in imminent peril of capsizing.

Flocks of small bats, disturbed from their daily slumbers by our passage, flitted about in a dazed way, and the usual clouds of beautiful butterflies revelled in the sultry atmosphere which rose like steam from the baking mud. In the evening the unending roar of the howling monkey came from afar off in the woods, as if all the lions in Africa had been let loose and were preparing for a feed on human flesh. Fortunately, the bite of this denizen of the forest is not as bad as his bark, otherwise it might not have gone well with us. For so small and inoffensive an animal he certainly makes a terrific din.

At night we were frequently treated to the

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blood-curdling serenade of jaguars, but they never came close enough to our camp to be troublesome. Had they done so I had a useful .303 rifle and a revolver always handy.

The few occasions on which either of these weapons were ever used hardly justified the trouble of carrying them. Later on, when they might have been serviceable, they had gone down to the bottom of the river in a whirlpool, and were therefore not available. A much more useful weapon was carried by the *bogas* in the shape of an antique muzzle-loading shot-gun, and with it they brought down many birds during the daytime that went into the pot for our evening meal. The best all-round weapon for this part of the world is probably a 16-bore shot-gun.

Food was an all-important question. I carried with me a small quantity of tinned goods as emergency rations, but our party depended chiefly on a supply of yucas and bananas, which, when exhausted, could not be replenished ; consequently, we were always on the look-out for something to re-stock our larder. Turtles and turtles' eggs were obtained in profusion, and on these we largely subsisted. Every sand-bar was scanned very carefully for traces of these animals, and one, which I recall very vividly, was raided with great success, providing almost 2,000 eggs in just over two hours. These we salted down in the canoe, and they lasted the five of us nine days before showing signs of going bad. They were generally boiled or made into a sort of pancake—a true omelet was not possible, as the yolk and white would never mix. The way I enjoyed them most was baked



COLLECTING TURTLES' EGGS ON A SAND-BAR.

A TRAGEDY IN THE ANIMAL WORLD

in the embers of a fire until the tough, parchment-like shell and contents were quite crisp.

Two varieties of turtle were encountered, known locally as the *Charapa* and the *Taracaya*. The former is over two feet across when fully grown and lays a large round egg, while the latter is small and lays a perfectly oval egg, 50 to 60 in a nest. The *charapa* lays 100 to 120.

The life of the turtle and its struggle for existence is typical of the many tragedies that abound in the Amazon country. When the river is low, exposing large areas of soft white sand, Mrs. Turtle decides to lay some eggs. She comes out of the water at night, and if a hungry jaguar is not at hand waiting to pounce on her, she deposits her eggs in the sand, covers them up, and crawls back to the water thoroughly satisfied with her night's work.

The next morning, before the sun and wind have obliterated her tracks, an Indian comes along, or else some half-caste; seeing the marks in the sand, he lands, locates the nest, and promptly removes all the eggs for his own consumption. If by chance they should remain undiscovered by man or beast, and the young ones do hatch out, they have to make a pretty good run for the water to get there without being set upon by birds or other animals. Out of a hundred eggs laid it is doubtful whether two ever reach maturity.

Another of Life's tragedies—to be seen everywhere, but not always appreciated—is the case of those forest trees covered with graceful vines and parasitic growths. How beautiful they look to the human eye festooned and draped with luxurious vegetation, yet in reality it is but a murderer's

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cloak, as the finest tree must succumb in the end to the constant drain the parasite makes on its vitality. Many times I have seen a tree attacked not only this way in its branches, but by the river about its roots ; such a tree is doubly doomed, for if the parasite fails the river will not, and the day will come when it will fall and be carried off bodily by the first flood, just as sure as the sun sets.

Our progress westward continued very slowly. It was only by making very early starts and camping late that we were able to make any headway at all. No signs of man were there in any shape or form until we reached Limon, and then only a small shanty on the north bank inhabited by Hector Melendez. We went on shore to look round, and were treated to a good lunch before continuing on our way.

The place is quite picturesque, there being a large island in the centre of the river. Gravel is not only found in the form of *playas*, but constitutes the major portion of the banks themselves, which are high and solid ; in some places it has been deposited on the top of wood and debris brought down centuries ago, compressing it into a soft black substance, which can be cut easily with a knife and makes excellent fuel. Another peculiarity which I first noticed in this part of the river was the occurrence of gravel cemented together into a solid mass of conglomerate.

After leaving Limon we kept going pretty steadily for five hours, stopping occasionally to take a shot at a *tucan* or *paujil*, if ever we were lucky enough to see one. By evening we had reached the big bend of the river where it sweeps

ON FOOT FOR A CHANGE

round to the northward. There was an enormous *playa* at this point on which we camped, and from it we saw with great distinctness the most easterly ridge of the Andes, standing out clear and sharp against the western sky.

Every day now brought marked changes in our surroundings: the gravel became more and more coarse, sand-bars were the exception rather than the rule, and in many places extensive areas were covered to a depth of five to ten feet with logs, jammed up together so as to form a solid mass. On the whole, the main channel was fairly free from obstructions, but there were places occasionally along the bank which taxed the utmost of our skill to get by.

It may seem a little odd to say that there was plenty of walking for those who cared to indulge in it; nevertheless it was quite true, and some days I spent most of the time on foot. The river was very low indeed, exposing huge *playas* of gravel, over which I walked, while the *bogas* towed the canoe through shallow water. These gravel-bars usually occurred on the inside of the bends, so at every corner it would be necessary to get into the canoe, cross over to the opposite shore, and then start out on another excursion on foot up to the next bend. Our course varied anywhere between west, north, and east, and was very tortuous, but I enjoyed the walking immensely in spite of the terrific heat. The gravel was much too hot to go without shoes; even the shallow pools of water were no better, and the first time I splashed into one with bare feet I soon jumped out again.

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

Whenever we saw sand it would be covered with tracks of animals—*tapir*, *ronsocos*, and various members of the cat tribe. In spite of all these indications I hardly ever saw an animal during the daytime, and only once did I get a shot at one. It happened to be in the early morning when this last diversion occurred, in the shape of a *tapir* hunt, which resulted unfavourably for the *tapir*, who dropped with a bullet in his head. The first shot landed above the shoulder, and I thought we had lost him, but he broke cover a second time, and so gave an opportunity for another round.

It was an old animal of great size and covered with layers of fat. Three hours were occupied in cutting it up, and we had to camp early that same evening in order to smoke the meat for future consumption. It was decidedly tough, but in comparison to *tucan* or parrots was as tender as lamb. A large, gaudy macaw fell a victim to the shot-gun of the *bogas*—yellow breast, blue and green back, and with a remarkably long tail. It seemed a pity to have to kill such a beautiful creature, especially as the carcass was too tough to eat, and the only nourishment to be derived from it was in the form of soup.

Don Eraclito's ignorance of the surrounding country led to my asking him how much of it he really did know. He tried to avoid the issue, but after pressing the point he admitted never having been beyond Estrella in his life. On top of this admission I made a further discovery, namely, that we would not travel all the way to Bellavista in our present canoe, but would charter another one from the Indians at the foot of the

Pongo and replace the present *bogas* with Aguaruna Indians, and so proceed in relays to our destination.

This was all very disquieting, for had Don Eraclito's physical energy corresponded with his mental ability, I would have had no cause to worry; but, alas! he never bestirred himself in the slightest, ate much, and needed more looking after than every one else put together. The prospects of continuing a difficult journey which would demand considerable physical endurance were not altogether reassuring with such a man in the party.

He endeavoured to smooth things over temporarily by saying that one of the *bogas*, Muñoz, was his half-brother, and he at any rate would go all the way with us, and would be of great assistance, since he had made a perilous descent of the river from Bellavista on a raft some years ago, and therefore knew something about the country. Whether his knowledge was worth the price of carrying along an indolent although pleasant companion was not so certain. If he had worked more and sung less it would not have been so bad, but perched up in the stern of the canoe he sang his favourite melody over and over again. It was a doleful lay about a rubber gatherer whose only food was a toasted banana, and ended up with the refrain that he was alone in the world, and spent his life like a bird in the sky.

Our last camp before arriving at the Pongo was an extremely pleasant spot on an island, one of a regular archipelago which occurred in this part of the river. The hills through which the Marañon had worn its way now appeared quite close, and encouraged me with the thought that

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

yet another stage of my journey was rapidly coming to an end.

We broke camp very early that morning and worked hard all day. At one moment skirting a gravel-bar, then poling our way amongst a forest of submerged timbers, at another going hell for leather against a swift current that surged round a promontory, or else paddling for dear life to the opposite shore, so as to avoid the strong current and deep channel usually found on the outside edge of a bend.

Late in the afternoon, when we were heading due west well into the mouth of the Pongo, with only a few miles left to go, a sharp whistle made us all turn round with a start. Our astonishment knew no bounds, for there, in full view, was a launch chugging laboriously up-stream. I signalled to it, and drifted alongside to see if I could persuade the captain to tow us the remaining distance. It turned out to be a most happy idea, since the owner, Sr. Otoniel Vela, of Iquitos, was on board, and welcomed me with the utmost cordiality and friendliness. Before I could make any suggestions whatsoever, he gave orders to have my gear transferred to the deck of his launch and the canoe tied up astern.

It was certainly a stroke of good fortune, for I was able to study the approach to this barrier under much better circumstances than I could have done otherwise. The launch was forced to keep in mid-stream, where the water was deep, and our progress against the swift current was extremely slow; but what a magnificent sight it was as we approached this range of hills through

ARRIVAL AT THE GREAT BARRIER

which the Marañon rushes ! High, wooded slopes rose up before us, first on one side, then on the other, as the river swerved from right to left. It is not straight, as indicated on Raimondi's map ; both the Pongo and the river immediately below it are as tortuous as they possibly can be. The banks soon became high and steep, piled up with loose water-worn boulders, or else masses of solid rock polished and scoured clean.

We reached the base of the hills at 6.30, the men going on shore, while I remained on board the launch for the night. I sat up late talking with Sr. Vela, since he expected to return the next day. He told me that his object in coming to such an out-of-the-way place was to procure limestone, of which there was an unlimited supply lying about in the form of loose boulders. It was for building purposes at Iquitos, and he hoped some day to establish a kiln at the Pongo, where he could make all the lime he required without having to import it from abroad, as heretofore.

At night there was a very marked drop in temperature, and I lay out on deck, with a cool wind blowing over me that had none of the moisture-depositing qualities of the breezes lower downstream. Another still more important change, and one greatly to be marvelled at, was the complete absence of mosquitoes.

Almost every one, at some time or another, has picked up a map of the South American continent and traced out the course of the River Amazon as shown upon it, wondering at the same time what this or that part of it was really like. I have done so myself frequently, and for some

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inexplicable reason that point where it breaks through the last ridge of the Andes, before debouching on the Amazon plains, always had a strange fascination for me. I had pictured it in my mind's eye as something entirely different from what it actually proved to be ; yet now, as I stood on the very spot I had thought of and dreamt about so much, I was not disappointed in what I saw.

Half a century ago there had been a small but flourishing settlement called Borja on the north bank ; it had a chequered history, and was finally rendered so unhealthy by reason of the warlike tribes of Indians nearby that, except for the name, which still persists on many maps, it has fallen into an abyss of forgetfulness and disappeared. On the opposite shore a more recent attempt was made by the Peruvian Government to establish a military post called Puerto Melendez, but it also shared the same fate, and was abandoned.

For many reasons the Pongo de Manseriche is interesting ; the shallow but cool westerly wind which blows most of the day, and the complete absence of mosquitoes during the night, make it quite a healthy and invigorating place to live, yet the settlers stand in such dread of the savage tribes that not a single one can be found near it. Roughly, it is 2,500 miles from the mouth of the Amazon and at an elevation of 600 feet above the level of the sea. This means that the average fall of the river is actually less than three inches per mile. The source of the Amazon is some 500 miles further on, away up in the Andes to the southward, and the Pacific coast is not more than 300 miles away

THE PONGO DE MANSERICHE

in a straight line to the south-west. The ridge of hills, through which the river has here carved its way, forms part of the great Andean chain, but it is considerably detached from the main series, and is of no great elevation—probably not more than 2,000 feet above the surrounding country. The slopes are well wooded from top to bottom, and have not the bare summits characteristic of the higher altitudes.

The country rock consists of alternate layers of limestone and sandstone, tilted up at an angle of 60° and running at right angles to the course of the river, which is more or less east and west. This curious stratification is responsible for the treacherous currents and eddies which get set up in the Pongo and render the passage of it so dangerous. The texture of the sandstone being comparatively soft, it has been very much eroded by the water, leaving the hard limestone projecting out into the stream in a series of buttresses. Back of these are large shifting whirlpools—a menace to any light canoe that may venture near them—and around the rocky promontories the foaming waters surge and hiss with varying fury. Of obstructions in the centre of the channel there is but one solitary rock half-way through the gorge, and it is only exposed to view when the water is very low. In width the cañon varies from several hundreds of feet across to approximately one hundred and fifty feet in some of the narrower parts towards the lower end. The walls also vary considerably; they are seldom vertical faces of rock, as is generally imagined, but abrupt slopes covered with trees to within twenty feet of the

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water's edge ; in half a dozen places there are limestone cliffs forty to fifty feet high, but not much more. In length I estimated it to be in the neighbourhood of three and a half miles, although, like other dimensions, this can only be taken as approximate, since I had no means for making exact measurements, even had I wanted to. Several mountain torrents empty their waters into it on either bank—one in particular on the south shore, towards the top end, being of quite a good size.

Approaching the foot of the Pongo by river the hills rise up abruptly like a great wall, and out of this the waters come swirling along round a sharp bend, as if from the very bowels of the earth. On my arrival the river was low, yet it gave forth an incessant booming that could be heard a long distance away. The pitch of the note varied with the volume of water that was sluicing through the gorge. In times of flood, when great trees and branches would come crashing along on the foaming mass, it would rise to a regular shriek, and then, as the water subsided, the note would become low and musical again.

It was not surprising that the place was regarded as an impassable barrier, beyond which existed all the evils known to man. The frowning hills, scarred rocks, and seething waters were all calculated to make one hesitate and think twice before venturing near it. To anyone who was determined to see what lay beyond, the thought of defeating such an obstacle was irresistibly attractive.

Don Eraclito did not share my sentiments ; he took a more serious view, and had no wish to



APPROACHING THE PONGO DE MANSERICHE.

OUR NUMBERS THIN OUT

face battle in the whirlpools if he could avoid it. For several days past he had been talking a good deal about hardships, dangers, etc., and now a man on the launch told him of some one who had recently been murdered by the Indians ; this was the last straw. With such stories in his mind and the shriek of the rising waters in his ears, he approached me with the usual run of excuses. He had a wife and family, and had been away from them such a long time, so would I allow him to go back on the launch *Meteor* if his half-brother, Muñoz, would take his place ? It amused me immensely to hear him ; evidently he did not realise he had a wife and family when he set out ; presumably it takes savages and whirlpools to make some people alive to their responsibilities. I accepted his withdrawal with the usual outward expressions of regret, but in reality was very glad indeed not to be saddled with his company any further, and thanked Sr. Vela profusely for taking him off my hands.

Even Sr. Vela was inclined to look upon my proposed journey as extremely risky, and before he set sail made a final offer to take the lot of us back on his launch. Muñoz and the two *bogas* were anxious to accept, as Eraclito had given them to understand that their services would only be required up to the Pongo, and that their places would then be taken by Indians whom we would meet there. Of the Indians we had seen so far only one would come with me, and his canoe was much too small to be of any use. His name was Shamika, and he told us of a large Indian settlement not many days up river, where we could

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get another canoe and all the men we wanted. On the strength of this, and by dint of much personal persuasion, I was able to instil a little life into my men and get them to agree on not turning back. The final arrangement arrived at was that Muñoz would go all the way to Bellavista with me, and Shamika, with the two *bogas*, as far as the first Indian settlement, where we could charter a new canoe and new men.

Thirty-eight hours after our arrival at the Pongo, Sr. Vela had stowed away on board all the limestone his launch could carry, and was on his way back to Iquitos. The small handful of us that remained behind watched him go; it might have been yesterday, so well do I remember the scene. The low hills shrouded in the flimsy mist of early morning, shouts of "*Felicitades*" from a dozen throats, the waving of hats, the launch carried swiftly down-stream, the last hoot of its whistle as the hull vanished behind the trees, and then—the final thread which tied us to the outside world snapped.

Only those who are familiar with conditions in the Amazon jungle can understand the feelings which such farewells engender. Noisy partings, followed by long periods of privation and hardship in the trackless forest, fall to the lot of many a man in these parts; seldom are the demonstrations on his return on a par with his leavetaking. Foot-worn and weary, starving and sick, he not infrequently crawls back alone to some distant outpost, thankful if only to be alive; he enquires as to the fate of his companions, who, in desperate straits like himself, had taken another route; nothing

CUT OFF FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD

has been heard of them ; months pass, years, till all hope is given up, and they, like many others, are just forgotten.

Once in a great while traces of some lost expedition will come to light—a rumour, or else something found. On one of my journeys a bundle of papers came into my hands, all illegible, except a sketch-map, which was unharmed ; it related to an expedition headed by Mirko Selgan which had been lost in the forest a year or two previously. The map bore a cross to mark the exact spot where it had come to grief ; outside of this solitary piece of paper it could be truly said that the forest had swallowed them up.

What if the same fate befell my present expedition ? Would we be the exception to prove the rule ? Would everything run smoothly, or would we just go through hardships more pleasant to talk about than experience ? I looked at my silent companions as if asking them for an opinion, but the only answer was the shriek of the rising waters as they tossed impatiently in the Pongo. “ Come on, men ! ” I shouted, “ let us have breakfast,” and we did.

With Sr. Vela's departure there was nothing for us to do but wait patiently for the river to subside, as we could not think of moving until the waters were at their very lowest ebb. I occupied my time in various ways—short tramps through the forest, excursions along the banks of the Pongo, or else on the unending hunt for food. The water was much too hot for photographic work, the average temperature in the river being 73° to 74° ; so it was quite useless to attempt anything in that line.

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My chief object of interest was the river itself, and I kept a constant record of its variations ; during the time we were encamped on its banks it rose and fell within the limit of ten feet, and this was the dry season ! Shamika's judgment seemed infallible ; several times when the water was low and stationary, I would call his attention to it, thinking that we might make an attempt to pass the barrier, but he would only shake his black head, and sure enough another rise would set in before a couple of hours had elapsed.

Although not exactly suspicious, I wondered what was at the back of this fellow's mind in going up river with us ; it evidently suited his purpose admirably, or he would not have been so keen ; furthermore, he was very emphatic about not passing beyond the Indian settlement which he spoke about, for the reason that he had stolen a woman from a house near there last year and was at war with the family as a result. It looked to me very much as if this habit of stealing wives was becoming a hobby with him, for he had three already, and on this journey he was after a fourth. Whatever his propensities were it made little difference so long as he did not use us as a cloak for carrying on another raid amongst his neighbours, and so embroil our party in a feud. Although this looked highly probable he was too good a man to lose, and we had to take the chance ; when it came to handling a canoe he was a marvel, and I was convinced that if he could not land us safely through the Pongo no one else could.

The psychological moment arrived ; it was the fifth day after our arrival, and I woke to the sound

BATTLE IN THE WHIRLPOOLS

of heavy rain. Curiously enough, the river was falling rapidly, and by eleven the air had cleared and the local wind was blowing up fresh in our faces. At noon precisely we set out, Shamika in the bow taking charge of operations, Muñoz in the stern, the other two *bogas* and myself amidships with the cargo. Entering along the north shore we worked our way skilfully round the limestone buttresses that protruded from the bank ; it was a case of brains *versus* force. The water was flowing swiftly but easily, and only along the rocky shore was there very much foam ; indeed, the difference noted between this occasion and times when I had watched it in flood was extraordinary.

Our progress was naturally slow ; striking the back eddy of a whirlpool the canoe was propelled up-stream near the bank at a lively rate till a promontory was reached ; here everybody would clamber out on to the exposed rocks, remove the cargo, and tow our fragile craft around the point against the rushing current, one man remaining in the bow with a pole to keep it clear of the shore, while the rest of us hauled lustily. So long as the canoe never got across the current all would be well, and once round the point in a backwater the cargo would be re-stowed, and we went sailing up-stream again to the next buttress, where the same cycle of operations would be repeated.

One point was too difficult to pass round, so we had to cross over to the south bank, and in so doing my men displayed great skill. If we started away from the shore too late we would get drawn into the next whirlpool ahead of us ; if too early, we would be carried down-stream too

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far and get wrecked on the rocks of the opposite shore. In other words, there was but one place where we could get clear from the north bank, and one spot on the south bank where we could strike a back current of the whirlpool that would draw us inshore, and not to the centre of the vortex. In mid-stream we had also to be careful that the canoe did not get beam on to the current, or it would have been swamped; on the other hand, if it lay parallel to the current, we would have been carried down-stream too far in spite of our efforts.

We actually lost some two hundred yards in the operation, and worked like demons the whole time. Deep water, churned up into foam rushing and hissing by, could not be treated lightly with a heavily-laden canoe, and I was glad when we were over in safety. Within five hours from starting we were through the worst part of the gorge, by six opposite the Canusa Yacu, or Santiago river, and half an hour later snugly camped on a large sand-bar for the night. Thanks to Shamika, and the untiring energy of the *bogas*, a miracle had happened—the Great Barrier was behind our backs.

CHAPTER X

I LABOURED under the delusion that once through the Pongo all would be well, but fate arranged otherwise ; our troubles had barely started.

In a blissful and contented state of mind, born of ignorance of what was to come, I stretched myself out for the night in a saucer-like hollow on a sand-bar, at peace with the world and happy to think that in our first bout with the foe we had won hands down.

There were no mosquitoes to make night hideous, the air was not the least oppressive, and I slept soundly, in consequence, dreaming of canoes and rushing waters, of upsetting and drowning, quite amusing episodes to dream about now that our difficulties were over, and we were safely through the Pongo ; but yet dreams have a way of being vividly realistic at times, and when they deal with such things as drowning they are apt to be rather terrifying. I made an effort to wake^up to throw off the nightmare^hwhich troubled me, and make a fresh start. What was the matter ? I was soaking wet—actually in the water ; surely it was all part of the ghastly dream—but there was no dream about it, it was a cold fact.

In the dim grey hours of early dawn I quickly grasped the situation. The river had risen rapidly

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in the night, and water was now pouring into the hollow where I had gone to sleep. By the time I had scrambled to safety there was over two feet of water where I had been lying. My companions were more fortunate ; they were on higher ground, but many of their belongings which had been left on the sand were soaked, and a few things had even floated off with the current, never to be seen again.

We had an early breakfast, and set out on our day's work dismal and dripping, till the sun came to our rescue and dried our clothing.

My camera had suffered from the effects of some water that had found its way into the carrying case, causing a vital part of it to become unglued. I had no means of repairing it, and but for the lucky thought of using the latex from the skin of a green banana it would have been out of commission for good. A bountiful application of this gluey substance and the affected parts adhered together once more in first-class style.

The country which we now journeyed through was of exceptional interest ; it had become quite flat again, was well drained, and had no tendency to be swampy. The soil was largely composed of gravel, and the all-pervading forest on top of it seemed more dense and more vigorous than any we had yet seen. Back of us the range of hills, which had cost us so much trouble and delay, loomed up like a bank of blue smoke on the horizon, and in front the river—always our enemy, the river—muddy and turbulent, put obstacle after obstacle in our path.

Up to the time of our arrival at the Pongo I

NOT A LIVING SOUL

had regarded the river as a friend, but the events of the past few days had brought about a great change in my sentiments towards it, so much so that now I looked upon the flowing waters as a repulsive monster, always on the look-out to entangle unwary humans in its clutches.

Although rapid progress was out of all question, sheer hard work and incessant slogging brought us just so much nearer our goal every evening. Not a sign of living soul was to be seen anywhere ; occasionally an old palm-leaf shelter on a sand-bar told us that Indians visited the place once in a while, but we never saw one, and so far as we knew we were the only people in the vast solitude that surrounded us. For that matter we might have been the only people in the world.

One morning, while cautiously making our way along the banks, we were surprised to see human footprints leaving the water's edge and leading off into a thicket of wild cane. We stopped to examine them, and wondered what kind of a man it could have been, here in this uninhabited region who had apparently walked out of the river, into the jungle, just like some wild animal of the woods.

Shamika showed unusual interest ; to him, no doubt, they conveyed a bookful of information. They were made by a woman, he said. How did he know that ? Because the feet were turned in, and not straight like a man's—at least, that was what Muñoz understood from his jabberings. It was an interesting discovery, but I feared complications might arise—visions of Shamika giving chase and returning triumphant with a fourth

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wife to grace his modest harem in the woods, passed through my mind, then what would happen to us with no one to launch us into savage society. My fears were unfounded, as he was enticed away from the scene without showing any particular desire to follow up the quarry, and the incident was soon forgotten.

We were paddling now over a large expanse of quiet water almost like a lake ; my thoughts had turned to flying-boats, and I was marking the locality on my sketch-map as an ideal seaplane station, when a piercing scream rent the still air. It was followed by others in quick succession.

A moment later a large dug-out canoe shot out from the opposite shore ; in it crouched three naked savages, yelling at the top of their lungs ; they were gesticulating and paddling frantically, making desperate efforts to head across our bows. It looked as if we were in for it properly this time, and the last words of my friends in Iquitos about Indians shrinking the heads of their enemies came back to me with renewed significance.

The dismay shown by the *bogas* gave me no assurance for our safety, and even the imperturbable Shamika in the bow was like a wild man, and tried to turn our canoe down-stream to get out of harm's way. I realised that such a manœuvre would be fatal, so I seized my paddle and kept the canoe on its course pointing up river, at the same time shouting to the men to keep on paddling as if nothing had happened.

It was well to be prepared for any eventuality, so I laid my rifle alongside of me ; then I remembered the beads in my waterproof bag, and hurriedly got

STRIFE NARROWLY AVERTED

out a bunch of white ones ; thus fully prepared, I awaited developments.

It was a curious sensation I experienced during those few minutes while the enemy approached ; nearer and nearer they came, shouting all the time. Whatever their mission was, it certainly was not friendly—Shamika's manner told me that—yet what did they take us for, what was their idea of attacking in the open ?

As the canoe came closer I saw there was a bunch of bananas in it ; this was my cue, and I was quick to act upon it. Holding up the beads I pointed alternately to them, the bananas, and my mouth, as if I wanted something to eat and was prepared to give them the beads in exchange for their fruit.

The effect was electric ; they stopped shouting, hesitated, and then came alongside, the bananas and beads exchanged hands, along with a few odds and ends to show the Indians that we were perfectly friendly. Shamika and the men appeared greatly relieved, cordial relations were soon established, and we all repaired to a convenient sand-bar for a pow-wow.

Our friends proved to be Huambisa Indians, the traditional enemies of the Aguarunas, the tribe to which Shamika belonged. As the latter was at war with his own people, he was regarded in this particular instance as a friend, and treated accordingly. This threw a little light on past events, but there was still much that was obscure and unintelligible to us, since Muñoz knew very few words of the Aguaruna language, and was useless as an interpreter.

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The conference was short and animated, accompanied by any amount of side play and gesticulating, from which we deduced that there had been a fight somewhere and events of importance had taken place further up the river, which made Shamika anxious to move on. I was not sorry when he joined forces with the other Indians in their canoe and left us to ourselves; he was evidently on the warpath, and with such a fire-brand in our midst there was no telling what complications we might not let ourselves in for.

It was three hours' hard work before we arrived at the island and stream on the south bank where we understood the Indian settlement was to be found.

Shamika and his friends had lagged behind after the first half-hour, and eventually dropped out of sight altogether, never to be seen again. The motives which swayed them were now made clear; instead of a few Indian huts peacefully snuggled away in the woods, a large black patch of smouldering ashes was the only thing to be seen. The whole place had been ransacked and burnt to the ground!

I went on shore alone to reconnoitre, since Muñoz and the men would not leave the canoe for fear of encountering some of the combatants still prowling in the bush. The destruction had been complete with the exception of one hut, half of which remained intact, and in the centre of it lay two dead Indians and a mummified corpse; fighting had been recent, and the attack a surprise one, for several spears were standing in the racks untouched.

A BURNT SETTLEMENT

This was a nice mess to get landed into after coming such a long way. It might even mean returning to Iquitos, if my men refused to go any further, and that was the last thing I wanted to do ; yet the prospect of getting a canoe and Indians to man it was absolutely nil, and heaven only knew how much further we would have to go before finding another settlement.

The end of a hard day's work was not a propitious time to suggest further hardships to my companions—"sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof"—and accordingly I did not broach the subject then, but waited until morning when they had rested and eaten well.

Bananas and yucas were so plentiful that we helped ourselves lavishly, and had a really good meal for a change. Had it not been for the rain the night would have passed off well for all of us. I slept under the roof of the half-burnt hut, but the *bogas* preferred to lie out on the sand and get wet.

During some of our attempts to extract information from Shamika I remembered his saying that yet another Indian settlement existed higher up where the river made a big bend, at a place called Pati Huashani. I decided to make this a definite objective to aim for, and to persuade my *bogas* to continue with me up to that point, at any rate, in search of the elusive Indians and canoe that were to carry us forward to Bellavista.

Naturally they rebelled when I suggested it, and clamoured that we all go back at once, before we were murdered, or any other ill befell us.

Negotiations with men of this class call for much

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diplomacy and patience; antagonistic and bullying tactics never get one very far, nor is it advisable to be weak and constantly give way to their demands. In this case I had chosen my time well. At eight o'clock, when the sun was shining, the unpleasant experiences of the night had been forgotten, they had been allowed to sleep as late as they wanted to, and, above all, they had stuffed away more food under their belts in the past twelve hours than they had seen in the past week. Muñoz was sullen, neither helping nor hindering me, but I won my point in the end, and with our canoe well laden with food we once more set out into the unknown.

We put in a difficult morning's work, and by noon had covered quite a respectable distance. Rain had been falling and more was to be expected, judging from the heavy black clouds that were flying overhead. We did not have to wait long, a steady downpour was soon in progress, and the river started to rise. We laid up for lunch alongside a gravel-bar until the worst had passed over, and were then on our way again, hugging the shore for a mile, crossing to the opposite bank, dodging timbers, avoiding rocks, always following the path of least resistance.

|In a small backwater further indications of the recent fighting were encountered: two or three large canoes broken to pieces. It was just one more sight to upset my men, who had already had about as much as their simple nerves could stand. I would have liked to have prevented it, but they had seen the destruction and drew their own conclusions.

THE FATAL WHIRLPOOL

The river was rising steadily, yet still we groped, pulled, and pushed our way doggedly ahead.

At three o'clock we approached a whirlpool of unusual size, formed behind a mass of high rocks that stuck out uninvitingly into the stream. Under normal conditions we would have landed and towed the canoe empty round the point ; unfortunately the nature of the banks prevented this, but we had no misgivings as to what the outcome would be if we remained in the canoe, since the vortex of the pool was some distance away and the current round the point was not very turbulent. At the most critical moment one man lost his hold on the shore and the pole of the other broke ; we drifted away rapidly, and by the time paddles were brought into play the current had taken charge, and we were powerless against it.

Round and round we went, paddling desperately in the hope that some accidental shift of the current might release us at the last moment, but the circles we described became smaller, our motion more pronounced, our hope of escape less. No mercy could be expected of our enemy the river ; he had us in his grip, and was not to be cheated of his prey ; we had defied him too long, the penalty had now to be paid.

For what seemed a century we battled with the inevitable, all the time getting sucked nearer and nearer to the swirling waters in the centre of the pool.

I was too intent on the struggle to even think, but I saw everything. A floating log, caught like ourselves in the maelstrom, collided with us, and the end had come. A lip of green water curled

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

over the edge of the canoe, the world spun round, up went our bow in the air, and then packages, paddles, and men seemed to fall on top of me. The gurgling liquid closed in from above, and I went spinning down to eternity.

I recall taking one last breath and holding it for what I thought was a million years ; I recall being jostled along the bottom of the river and being bumped up against rocks and other obstructions ; I recall a push from below, as if from some giant hand, and then I was shot up to the surface in an upcast current.

I had been told that one's only chance of safety in a really large whirlpool lay in not struggling ; at any rate, I let myself go, and it was probably due to that that I disentangled myself so soon.

The sight of the green banks rushing by put new hope into me, and although I had quite reconciled myself to being drowned, I struck out and reached the shore after considerable difficulty. Once on terra firma I surveyed the scene that lay before me ; no men, no canoe, nothing, only the forest and the ever-moving hungry waters of the river ; then, indeed, did a feeling of dismay come over me. Why had I not allowed myself to be comfortably drowned in the river while I was about it, instead of saving myself for the more terrible fate of dying from starvation and exposure in the woods ?

Hardly knowing what I did, I forced my way along the bank through the tangled and twisted vegetation, but the exertion brought me to my senses, and I stopped to figure out a plan of action. We had come round a very sharp bend in the river ;

AN UNPLEASANT SITUATION

therefore it would be best to cut across through the forest and make for the camp where we had lunched. There was just the possibility that on the gravel-bar some of my valuable belongings might have come to rest.

With the aid of my pocket compass I set out, slowly at first, picking my way with care, but gradually my pace quickened and I tried to hurry. There were many mud-holes into which I would flounder up to my knees. I would be tripped up by *bejucos* or creeping vines, that trailed over the ground ; then grabbing at some nearby branch to keep myself from falling, my hands would be cut and slashed by innumerable thorns. Boughs and twigs would fly back in my face, and when I would push some branch out of the way that hindered my progress a shower of black ants would fall down on me, biting me vigorously. In my haste to get on I jumped up on to a large fallen tree-trunk, only to have my feet go right through it, since it was rotten with age and nothing but a shell.

In this position I stopped, short of breath, and bleeding from wounds inflicted by the thorns and spines with which every tree seemed to be armed. I must have presented a wild spectacle : cut and scratched, with my few clothes torn to ribbons, and my face and hands covered with dirt and filth from the decaying vegetation.

Extricating myself, I stopped still for a few moments to reflect on my position. " This will never do," I said to myself aloud. " Pull yourself together, and go back to the river as leisurely as possible." An echoing response seemed to come

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from somewhere inside of me, and whether I wished it or not I found myself walking due east, compass in hand, not hurrying or scrambling round obstructions as before, but quietly selecting my way amongst the entanglements of plant-life.

All was stillness about me except the noise made by some animal running away in the bush, or the whirr of some bird's wings as it flew off at my approach ; so quiet did everything seem that the noise I myself made sounded like an elephant crashing through the forest. The light was failing, but I kept straight on, imbued with a sense of direction and energy difficult to account for.

It seemed impossible that this could be anything else than a dream ; here, only a few hours ago, I was travelling in a canoe with three other human beings, and then the rippling swash along the canoe's side, the world turned upside down, and everything disappeared.

It all seemed real enough and yet so absurdly impossible. The reality of it, however, came back as I caught the sound of running water, and realised that I must be near the river once more. Parting some branches I found myself on the bank, and there, to my great astonishment, twenty feet below me alongside the shore, was my canoe and in it my three men. One had my sun helmet in his hands, and I heard Muñoz say, " Let us go back. The *patron* is evidently drowned."

They must have had the shock of their lives when my voice came from above, " No, no ; let us go on higher up the river for the night." They certainly looked surprised, and in Muñoz' face I seemed to catch a shadow of disappointment.



TYPICAL SCENE EAST OF THE ANDES.



HOW IT HAPPENED

Without further ado I scrambled down into the canoe ; the rain had once more started, and we crossed over to the opposite bank to look for a suitable place to camp. Luck favoured us ; a small but recently made *tambo* was discovered on the shore, evidently made by the Indians who had been on the warpath, as it was not more than forty-eight hours old. Here we settled down for a long, wet, and dreary night.

I at once questioned Muñoz as to what had happened. It seemed that when the inevitable occurred all three men had clung to the canoe like so many leeches, and being thus buoyed up had not been carried down into the whirlpool, but had floated about a mile down-stream, righted the canoe in a calm backwater, baled it out, and picked up several of my belongings which happened to be floating around. Then they had worked their way up-stream again in search of myself, and finding only my sun helmet, had come to the conclusion that I was lost, when I made the dramatic appearance just related.

I should mention also that according to the direction I took with my compass I ought to have hit the river at least a mile down-stream, instead of which I came out within twenty yards from where I had started in the first place. It was 3.30 when we struck the whirlpool, as my wrist-watch, which was full of water, ceased duty at that hour, so I must have been wandering about in the forest two hours or more.

Before darkness came to our relief and obscured the miserable river from our view, I made a note of the packages that had been rescued by the men.

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Every particle of food had gone—there was no need to look further ; that one loss in itself would probably mean our returning to Iquitos in the morning ; it seemed inevitable. The fortunes of our party were certainly at a low ebb.

Discouraged at the sudden turn events had taken, I entered a few bare facts about the disaster in my diary, which luckily had been preserved in its waterproof covering ; the date, of course, was the first thing to write down, and so it began—Friday, the 13th of September. “ Good gracious ! ” I exclaimed to myself, “ the 13th, and a Friday at that. What a combination to please the superstitious. No wonder we came to grief, and yet Friday is my lucky day.” How could I reconcile myself to that ? In thinking it over, I came to the conclusion that my good luck in getting out alive from the whirlpool was greater than my bad luck in getting into it, and so my good fortune as usual predominated.

All night it rained steadily, the continual dripping of the water from the trees sounding like some evil spirit gloating over our misfortunes. Camped in the dark and dismal forest, without a fire to cheer us, our clothes wringing wet, with the major portion of our belongings lost, we waited for the dawn with more anxiety than any shipwrecked mariner adrift on storm-tossed sea.

As the daylight began to filter through the tree-tops the rain ceased, and a dense fog crept over the landscape. I got up in the wet clothes in which I had been lying, bundled my few water-soaked packages into the canoe, roused the men from the lethargy into which they had fallen, and before

FIGHTING OUR WAY FORWARD

they realised what had happened our canoe was being sent resolutely up-stream.

To their anxious enquiries as to what we were going to do, I replied briefly that we would just go a little way up the river to the first sand-bar, where we could dry out our clothes and generally take stock of the situation. It was not the time or place to discuss plans ; I had not even opened a single package to see what had been saved or lost ; it might mean further discouragement for all of us ; if so, it was better postponed.

For two hours we fought and battled with the treacherous waters, keeping on the south bank so as to avoid the whirlpool which had been our undoing. The river had risen seven or eight feet, making it impossible to pole along the bank as we had done heretofore ; instead we sneaked under the overhanging boughs, swinging on to branches and performing all kinds of acrobatic tricks to avoid the many obstructions in our path.

Above the scene of yesterday's disaster we reached a point that no human effort could pass, and we had to cross over to the opposite bank. With care we managed it, and found ourselves just above the fatal whirlpool, having been carried by the current nearly a quarter of a mile (down-stream) in making the crossing.

So we went on, alternately progressing a mile and then losing half the distance when further progress on that bank became impossible and necessitated crossing over to the other. In about four hours we had passed the mouth of the River Nieva. The ground had become much higher, and for that reason the river was still harder to

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navigate. At eleven the sun came out, and was the most welcome thing I ever saw in all my life. We were now close to a sand-bar, and landed forthwith rather than risk further navigation. I had got the men well clear of the scene of our misfortunes, and with bright sunshine to bask in all afternoon they would soon be in better spirits, even if there was nothing for them to eat.

The canoe securely beached, the gear was carried up to a clean, open stretch of sand, and there in the blazing sunshine the various bundles were opened up for inspection. Although we knew in a general way what had been lost, yet each one of us had something special that he particularly hoped had survived the wreck.

The *bogas*' interest centred round the long-bladed *machetes*; to them they were the only thing that counted. They had good reason to think so, because without one of these valuable weapons it would hardly be possible to survive very long in the forest. They served a variety of purposes, from preparing food and splitting firewood to hacking a passage through the underbrush. One only had been saved; still, one was better than none, and they were satisfied.

Muñoz was chiefly concerned about the safety of the money—my money. He was only really satisfied when he had actually seen some of the golden coin. At the time his interest never struck me as curious, but in the light of subsequent events I quite appreciated his anxiety. All paper currency was lost, leaving forty Peruvian pounds to last me the rest of my journey to the coast.

My own special hope was that, since the cameras

BULK OF MY CARGO IS LOST

were no longer serviceable, the photos already taken might be saved ; my wish was granted almost in full, and many of the illustrations which now grace the pages of this volume were amongst them. My medicine-bag, diary, and maps had not even suffered from their immersion.

In bulk three-quarters of the cargo had been lost, but the quarter that remained was probably the most important. Of those things that went to the bottom of the river I have already mentioned the food, then all cooking utensils had gone and every scrap of camp equipment except a single blanket ; in future all such luxuries as mosquito nets and waterproof sheets, etc., would have to be dispensed with. Of clothing an old suit, top boots, pyjamas, and a few shirts remained, but brushes, combs, soap, etc., had all gone under, and it made me tremble to think what I would look like when civilised parts were once more reached. Four hundred rounds of rifle ammunition floated, but as all firearms had sunk it looked like a rather useless weight to lug about with us ; nothing however, was discarded—who knew but what they might not fill some useful function later on ?

In pulling out a bundle of clothes from the last bag a large packet of beads and ornaments rolled out on to the sand ; this was a very great piece of good luck, as in our present position they were worth a fortune for trading with the Indians, whereas the gold had no value at all.

We had divided our supply of most things in two halves and kept them in separate cases ; it was this system of splitting stores that resulted in our recovering such a good assortment. At

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the bottom of this last sack were three small packages which when unwrapped turned out to be tins of sardines. I gave one to each of the three men, since they had the hardest work to perform; as for myself, if I could not eat well, I preferred not to eat at all; it was like throwing a straw to a drowning man.

Mercifully for us the rain held off during the entire day, and before night drew her curtain of darkness over the scene everything had been thoroughly dried out and carefully packed away ready for the next move, whatever it might be.

Before turning in I sauntered down to the river to see what the prospects might be for the morrow, but the waters were tearing along in high flood, and unless they eased up pretty soon we would be marooned where we were for several days. Without food, the time was bound to arrive when sheer necessity would drive us back along the road we had come by, and I would have to abandon my cherished plans whether I wanted to or not. In the meantime, by almost superhuman efforts of persuasion, I had got the men to fall in with my ideas; how it was managed is hard to say, since it meant deliberately facing several days of starvation; at any rate, my unbounded enthusiasm won them over, and we all agreed to continue on up the river to that semi-mythical place, Pati Huashani, where food, at any rate, was to be found.

The following morning the waters had actually abated very considerably, and we were off at an early hour. There was no delay incidental to the preparation of breakfast; we just rolled up our blanket, put the three bundles on board, and there we were. At the last moment there were

THREE DAYS WITHOUT FOOD

signs of wavering in the ranks ; down-stream was such an easy way out of our difficulties ; it would mean a hot supper of yucas that very night at the burnt Indian settlement ; up-stream lay hard work and the unknown, without the redeeming feature of honour and glory to spur us on ; to hungry men such prospects did not have a very strong appeal.

A few good thrusts from my pole in the stern started the canoe in the right direction ; there was no mistaking my wishes, and we were soon making good headway along the southern shore ; seeing a smooth looking *brazo* we followed up it for some distance with great success. These side channels which parallel the course of the main river usually have sluggish currents, and, being shallow, they are generally much easier to navigate in canoe. On we pressed hour after hour, till darkness compelled us to camp for the night, only to face another's day's work when daylight returned. As the pangs of hunger assailed us it became more and more difficult not to turn and drift down-stream, but we were buoyed up with the hope that sooner or later we must encounter Indians.

Luckily the fine weather continued, and the flat nature of the country was favourable for encountering side-channels, through which we could advance comparatively easily.

In the afternoon we reached a huge right-angle bend to the west, which from Shamika's crude description could be none other than Pati Huashani. At last food was at hand ; our flagging energy revived, and we kept a sharp look-out for the habitations we expected to see. Yes, there was the big

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whirlpool that Shamika spoke about ; there was no doubt about it—we had arrived at last.

We were past the bend and still advancing when it gradually dawned upon our fatigued senses that we had drawn a blank ; there was not a single hut to be seen anywhere, and once again disappointment pierced our hearts. To me it was worse than disappointment ; it looked perilously like defeat.

There was a limit to human endurance, and in fairness to my men I could not expect them to go on indefinitely ; they were really splendid fellows, and had worked like Trojans in spite of all our misfortunes. No one could have felt more grateful to them than I did for having got us as far as they had, yet my destination was Bellavista, not Iquitos ; the question was, how was I going to get there ?

I called a council of war, and, as was to be expected, they openly rebelled and refused to go any further ; they were tired, hungry, and completely played out ; what could I do ? I could not blame them for wanting to go back, because Eraclito had only arranged with them to go as far as the Pongo, but Muñoz had contracted to go to Bellavista, and now he would not back me up in my arguments ; from his silence I knew that he secretly hoped the turning point had come.

We were approaching a low ridge of hills such as Indians usually inhabit in preference to the flat land, of which we had seen much during the past few days. If we could only reach the foot of those hills, some ten miles away, I had an idea that the situation might still be saved. So far I had held out no financial reward to any of the men other than the original price agreed upon in



RIVER SCENE IN THE FOOTHILLS OF THE ANDES.

HUNTING FOR FOOD

Barranca ; what if I offered a substantial cash reward ?—that might just get them to endure a little more hardship on my account. My supply of gold was very low, but under the circumstances it was worth spending some now ; if only it would advance me another ten miles I would take a chance of running short when nearing the coast.

Accordingly I offered to divide five pounds between the two *bogas* if they would push on up to noon the next day. It was a fortune to such people, but they were not moved by the thought of it. At last, after much talking, they agreed if I would camp then and there for the night ; but now I could not accept, the stake was too great ; two hours' of daylight remained, and I could not afford to lose a single opportunity of advancing, no matter how small. It is fatal to start loitering when things go badly ; in our own case had it not been for my urging the men forward at odd moments, and at times when things looked blackest, we would have been homeward bound long before now.

In the end I persuaded them to see that the time could be spent to better advantage, and we had chalked up three more miles to our credit before we finally settled down on a high sand-bar for a well-earned rest.

While I sat on a log to write up my notes, the men, armed with our one and only *machete*, went off into the bush, as usual, hoping to find something to eat. We had been living on hope for the past three days, and had not found it very fattening ; this was to be another such banquet, easily prepared and easily disposed of. They had been absent some time, and daylight was slipping away rapidly when I heard their cries in the distance, and saw

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them rush out of the forest as if a party of hostile Indians were at their heels. As they ran they shouted incoherently, and in a manner that left no doubt in my mind as to what had happened. Without arms to defend ourselves there was no time to lose if we were to make good our escape. I literally hurled the cargo into the canoe, pushed it out into deep water, and with everything ready for a quick get-away, scrambled up the bank again to see from what quarter the Indians were coming. In the gathering dusk the three men dashed up to me, short of breath and greatly excited.

"*Señor*," they panted, "*yucas, yucas*," and threw thirty or forty of them on the sand at my feet.

I may have moved quickly in preparing for our escape from the imaginary foe, but it was nothing compared to our combined efforts during the next few minutes while preparing our meal of yucas. Driftwood was collected and a good fire started in double-quick time, and then while we waited for the pot to boil, the story was told how in wandering round the woods they had found an abandoned Indian hut with yucas growing nearby, how they had pulled up by the roots all they could carry, how they had found an earthen pot in the hut, and finally brought the lot back to camp.

We laughed and talked over the event in all its details as excitedly as if it had been an affair of international importance, and only when the aching void beneath our belts had been filled did we revert to other topics. Boiled yucas without salt are about as unpalatable eating as anything imaginable, but the way they disappeared under our supervision did credit to our digestive organs.

SAVAGES AT LAST

The morning, which was to bring success or failure in its train, started just like any other. The mechanical process of loading up the canoe, the final inspection on shore to see that nothing was left behind, and then all eyes on the river, our day's work had begun.

I had no cause to grumble ; our rate of advance was, if anything, better than usual, but what about Indians ? Hour after hour drifted by and the forest remained unbroken, undisturbed ; not by sight or sound was I encouraged to think that habitations might be near. The sun gradually approached the zenith ; another hour and the stipulated time would have expired : we would be out in the centre of the river, and on our way back to Iquitos.

It hardly seemed worth while going any further, as we were making our way along a straight stretch of open water, which meant at least two hours' work before reaching the next bend. We could see clearly most of the way, and Muñoz suggested that since nothing was in sight we might just as well turn back and be done with it, but I delayed for a time. " Only a little further," I said, " and then we really will turn round."

The forward *boga* stopped for a moment and shaded his eyes from the glare off the water. " Look, *señor*," he said quietly. " Savages—over there—on the right bank."

I could have shouted with joy ; it was no hallucination ; several brown figures were standing close to the water's edge, watching our movements. Good fortune had smiled upon us ; our struggle had not been in vain.

CHAPTER XI

WE landed without any demonstration of hostility from the savages on the bank, and at the bidding of one of them followed up a path which led to an open hut, in the centre of a clearing planted with yucas. After making a few presentations of beads, as an expression of our friendly mission, we seated ourselves in the shade ; Muñoz knew half a dozen words of their language, I knew none, and the Indians did not understand a word of Spanish, with the result that the conversation which ensued was very limited, and was carried on chiefly by means of signs, with grunts at periodic intervals to relieve the monotony of the proceedings. We tried to explain that two of our men were returning down-stream with the canoe, and that Muñoz and myself wanted to get a new canoe and two more men to go up-river just as far as possible. To make our meaning more clear we beckoned to the assembly to follow us back to the bank, where we pointed to another canoe lying alongside our own and then to two Indians, waving our hands up-stream ; we also held up some beads and pointed to them, so gradually conveying the impression that we were anxious to travel and willing to pay.

Beads did not seem to be in much favour, so

THE RED CLOTH

other articles from our stock had to be produced. In opening up the parcel a large red cloth, used for photographic work, caught the eye of the owner of the hut ; he seemed very pleased with it, took it in his hands, fingered it, wrapped it about his waist, and finding it twice the size necessary for a loin cloth, went up to one of the women nearby, but changed his mind at the last minute, as she was too fat, and measured up a thinner one instead. This decided him ; he and his canoe were at our disposal for three days.

So far so good, but we still needed another man, and no one in this household wanted to join us. Higher up, they told us, was quite a big settlement called Huaracayo, where we could find another Indian ; so we set out for the place, leaving our new Indian friend in possession of the red cloth, and a savage promise to come on early the next morning in his canoe.

Round the bend there were a number of habitations, and as we landed near the largest one a horde of Indians came down to meet us. They were not hostile, but I gathered from the spears they carried that they were on the defensive and did not want to be caught napping.

I stepped on shore amongst them as unconcerned as possible, handing a string of beads to the most important looking individual. He patted me on the shoulder as if pleased, and pointed the way up steep steps cut in the bank, which brought us to a flat clearing on the hillside with a remarkably regular and well-built house in the middle of it. We were bade enter, and given some curious pieces of wood to sit on. To make us feel at home

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a boiled yuca was handed out to each of us, and then some soup, the preparation of which I had watched with considerable interest. The liquid had been poured out of a pot into four gourds, a woman then took the head of a large fish from another receptacle and dipped it repeatedly into the soup, squeezing it thoroughly after each immersion. It might not sound a very palatable dish, but we were not inclined to be fastidious, as outside of the yucas we had had the previous evening nothing had passed our lips for over four days.

During the afternoon there was a large influx of visitors from the outlying habitations, and we soon found ourselves in the centre of an admiring throng. It was an orderly, well-behaved assembly that collected to make our acquaintance, laughing and chatting in quite a normal manner, without any inquisitive staring such as white people often indulge in when thrown with strangers for the first time.

No matter what direction the conversation took we always managed to bring it back to the all-important topic of our journey and how it was to be continued. The proceedings afforded much amusement to every one, judging from the bursts of laughter which greeted our efforts to make ourselves understood. Huatinge, the Indian who had already promised to accompany us, came unexpectedly to our rescue, and caused the sensation of the day by appearing in his newly acquired scarlet loin-cloth. With his assistance we were able to persuade another Indian called Yampes to join our party, the consideration being thirty white buttons, twelve needles and a fish-hook.

A THREAT

There was no necessity for my two *bogas* remaining any longer, now that everything had been arranged, so calling them over I gave them their reward, and told them they could return to Barranca whenever they wished. In view of the way things had turned out they were greatly surprised when the five pounds was handed to them, and showed their pleasure by the rapidity with which they departed. In a matter of minutes their canoe was out in the centre of the river, being driven down-stream as fast as they could propel it. Never have I seen men more pleased to be gone than they were; in six days they would be safely back in their own homes; if I were back on the Pacific coast within six weeks I would be doing well.

While turning over the future in my mind, Muñoz came up to me and wanted to know how much I was going to give him as his reward. He had seen the *bogas* receive their five pounds, and his spirit of avariciousness was now coming to the surface. His words carried an implied threat that if I did not give him something it might go badly with me. So that was his attitude: I was not surprised, yet it gave me a momentary shock to have my thoughts confirmed. To have thrashed the nonsense out of him on the spot would have done my disposition a lot of good, but it would have only been contrary to my own interests in the long run, and I contented myself with promises which were easily made. He would have liked some money immediately, but I quietly told him that he would get his reward in full when we reached Bellavista, and the better he behaved

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

the more he would get ; thus the situation was temporarily relieved.

My followers were thinning out with a vengeance. On leaving Iquitos we had been a large party on board the launch ; at Barranca we numbered five ; at the Pongo we were reduced to four ; now we were cut down to two. How long would it be before I was left alone ? The men that had just left me were half-castes, and spoke only the imperfect Spanish of the river country ; difficult as it was to follow, we could, at any rate, understand each other ; from now on, outside of Muñoz, who was not inclined to be communicative, there would be no one with whom I could talk a single word.

Having no camera to work with, there was not very much for me to do, except write up my notes and watch the strange inhabitants of this strange place. What impressed me more than anything else was the extreme neatness of the house and the geometrical precision with which it was built in the form of a perfect oval. The roof was heavily thatched with palm leaves and the walls were formed of straight poles driven into the ground and lashed together in a thoroughly workmanlike manner. On the side away from the river a second row of short poles was driven into the ground at a distance of six inches from the main wall, the intervening space being filled with rocks, making a strong barricade five feet high. The side nearest the river had no extra protection whatsoever. The interior was cool and dark, with a narrow door at each end ; there were plenty of cracks, however, and the outside air circulated pretty freely. About twenty feet away from the main house there was



MURATO INDIANS IN THEIR CANOE.



A BABY PECCARY.

A WEIRD HOUSEHOLD

another small hut mounted on four substantial poles twenty-five feet off the ground ; a form of rope-ladder led up to it, and it was filled with an assortment of large rocks. In the event of an attack the women retired to this lofty perch and dropped rocks on the heads of their assailants, while the men from below poured showers of poisoned darts into their flank.

As the afternoon wore on our visitors withdrew, till only those who lived in the house remained. When darkness fell the two doors were closed, carefully barricaded with strong wooden cross-members, and not opened again until the morning. My resting-place for the night was the earthen floor, clean-swept and hard. I stretched myself out on it, hungry and weary, and with a log of wood as a pillow waited for sleep to waft me into a more comfortable world. Tired as I was, my surroundings were far too novel and interesting to allow of my going to sleep immediately ; the occupants of the hut, numbering thirty in all, men, women, and children, sat round the fires conversing in subdued tones, or else lay full length on the split bamboo racks that were built out from the wall of the *tambo* and served as beds for them to rest on.

Just as things were beginning to quieten down, some woman complained of pains in her stomach ; a concoction was at once prepared by the family, poured into a gourd, and handed to the husband. He took it, and seating himself at the foot of his rack, held it close to his mouth and started an incantation which lasted fully ten minutes. It sounded like "hodgy-de-podge," repeated over and over again, backward and forward. Several

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

times he stopped to get breath, but started up again with renewed energy, till, completely exhausted, he passed the gourd to the sufferer, lay back on his rack, and went to sleep.

The beverage seemed to have a good effect on the patient, as she made no further complaints, and in the stillness that ensued I also went to sleep. Not long after I was suddenly aroused by yells from the husband of the sick woman; he was writhing about on his rack like a snake, and screaming in a manner that was, to say the least, alarming. At the time I did not know that it was the evil spirit, which had been tormenting his wife, leaving his own body, but I was thankful when he once more collapsed in a state of exhaustion, and peace again descended on the household.

All through the night I was wakened at frequent intervals: first by a baby crying, then a dog barking, and twice a parrot let forth a screech that would have awakened the dead. No one seemed to sleep soundly, as each time I was brought back to the threshold of consciousness I would see brown figures flitting about in the dim firelight, or hear strange sounds issuing from the shadows. Several times I found myself wide awake, for no apparent reason, listening intently in the stillness and straining every nerve in anticipation of something that was about to happen.

Nothing transpired; a flame from some smouldering embers just flickered for a second and died away; a few whisperings came out of the darkness, and then all would be silence. As the night wore on, the moon rose and shafts of silver light streamed through the cracks of the

A RAINY START

walls ; outside, it was as bright as day, and once when I was disturbed by the growl of a dog near me, I saw the slim form of a jaguar making his rounds of the hut, stopping once in a while to put his paw through an extra large opening, as if anxious to force his way within.

When daylight brought me to my senses I rubbed my eyes vigorously, but was soon alive to the savage nakedness about me, and took a look outside the hut to see what weather might be expected during the day ; alas ! it was overcast, and threatened to rain at any moment. The savage, Yampes, who was to make up the fourth of our party, was on hand but did not want to start, till the sight of our canoe coming up-stream, with Huatinge decked out in all his new finery, caused him to waver. I took advantage of his indecision to get him down to the river, and, with my gear on board, we were once more on our way.

It was well I had not delayed our departure, for in ten minutes the rain was coming down in torrents, and kept up a steady downpour all day long. Loin-cloths, of course, were discarded at once, wrapped up carefully in large leaves, so as not to get wet, and stowed away in the canoe. Indians, when travelling this way, do not load themselves down with baggage or extensive provisions for the journey ; outside of their wardrobe, consisting of a loin-cloth, my own carried a couple of spears and a small wicker-basket containing a white, pasty-like substance called *nija-manchi*, done up in banana leaves. It was a preparation of yuca, which, when diluted with water, produced an intoxicating beverage that they seemed to relish,

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

for every time we stopped—and we did so pretty frequently—the basket would be produced and a gourdful of the milky liquid prepared.

The river was by no means easy to navigate, and it required considerable effort on the part of the new *bogas* to push our fragile craft forward through the treacherous waters that hurled themselves against us. We safely passed another of those awful *pongos*, or gorges, that had been cut by the river through a low ridge of hills, leaving the usual rocky salients jutting out into the stream like so many death-traps for the unwary. Luckily the country rock was red sandstone, without any inter-stratification of hard limestone; we were therefore spared the duplication of the peculiarly difficult passage that had characterised the Pongo de Manseriche. About half-way Huatinge pointed up a small *quebrada* that came in on our right, saying “*Hui*,” or “*wirh*,” and then tasted the water, motioning us to do likewise. It was decidedly saline, and indicated the presence of salt in some shape or form not far away.

Within three hours we had squirmed our way through the worst part of the gorge without incident—except rain, and how it did rain! I sat in the centre of the canoe like a drowned rat, continually baling out the water and trying to look cheerful. In reality I was not at all pleased with life; food at the Indian house had been very scarce, and I was feeling decidedly weak as the result of the privations we had gone through; then, on top of it all, this continual downpour was most depressing. Wet, soaking and drenched, I would be in the canoe one moment baling out the water, then

WATER INSIDE AND OUT

splashing on shore the next, tugging on to a slimy rope, the water running down my neck in a constant stream. I stood in water, sat in water, my clothes dripped water, my shoes oozed water, until I was so saturated with water inside and out that I felt it would be easier and more comfortable to just plunge into the river and swim the rest of the way.

The canoe was much smaller than the one we had set out in from Barranca, and afforded us no room to spare when once the cargo and ourselves were on board. It was not very stable either, and many times we were in imminent peril of upsetting. The Indians handled it with deftness and precision that under more agreeable circumstances would have been a pleasure to watch, but deluged with water and in constant fear of my remaining cargo being hurled into the jaws of our enemy the river, kept me continually on edge and blind to anything, save the immediate needs of the moment.

Under the circumstances it was impossible to keep a record of our general direction, the tortuous course of the river making it still more difficult. As we approached each new bend my hopes would rise, and I looked forward to seeing a more favourable stretch of water unfold, but that was asking too much ; each bend not only brought disappointment, but some new form of river frightfulness to torment us. Had we been heading downstream we would have had the great satisfaction of knowing that our troubles would get less daily, but here we were, pointing up-river, with the equally certain knowledge that each day would land us in still worse difficulties.

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

In the latter part of the day I had to walk over several long, boulder-strewn shores ; I was shod with what had been a pair of low shoes, but they had lost all sense of shape ; and the leather being water-logged, I slipped amongst the loose rocks and gravel as if on ice, making it both fatiguing and painful to proceed even a hundred yards. In several places we encountered large parties of Aguaruna Indians, smeared with the characteristic red and blue-black dyes. They looked remarkably clean and healthy specimens of both sexes, but we did not stop to fraternise with them, as we were anxious to push ahead with all possible speed.

About two in the afternoon we swung round to the left and passed a river called Sinipa, coming in on the north bank right at the very centre of the bend. It flows due south, and at its confluence with the Marañon makes a difficult passage to pass. It is navigable by canoe for three days, after which it becomes a brawling torrent. To anyone anxious to study the Aguaruna and Antipa Indians this would be a very interesting place to visit, as the banks of the river are thickly populated with people who have never had occasion to come in contact with the whites.

Shortly after passing the Sinipa we repaired to a hut on the bank for the night ; the inmates were extremely hospitable, and for the first time in five days we had a really good meal. The head man of the household, Panchu by name, had several wives, young and good-looking Indian women ; the children, however, took my fancy—pretty, clean, and well-built, quite the most entertaining

AGUARUNA AND ANTIPA INDIANS

youngsters I had ever seen. There seemed to be an air of contentment and enjoyment about the shanty which many European homes might well envy. Several of the young braves wanted to trade for beads and buttons, but I conserved my limited supply, as I did not know what the future might bring forth and my trust in Muñoz was rapidly ebbing away.

Panchu spoke a few words of Spanish and was probably not a pure-blooded Indian, although in appearance there was nothing to distinguish him from other Aguarunas except a pair of ragged trousers. From fragments of conversation I had with him and subsequent information that came into my hands, I learnt that about fifteen years previously a man from Chachapoyas had founded a settlement called Nazareth on the edge of the Indian country with the object of trading in rubber ; for a short time all went well, but his abuse of the Indians soon threw them into a state of revolt ; his house was burnt and most of his men killed, the only pity being that the man himself was away at the time and so escaped. Since then settlers had given the whole of the Marañon a wide berth, and the Aguaruna and Antipa Indians have remained in undisputed possession of the country.

Whether the Antipas are a distinct tribe, or only a sub-tribe of the Aguarunas, has not been definitely established ; they speak the same language and to all outward appearances are identical ; the only differences, so far as I am aware, are in minor customs, such as piercing the lobe of the ear and inserting a small stick of cane therein about one and a half inches long ; furthermore, they are

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

supposed to keep religiously to the north bank of the Marañon and never cross to the southward.

As a race the Aguarunas stand four feet eight inches to five feet two inches in height, the women usually being considerably smaller than the men. They are a friendly people by nature, but tenacious fighters when once aroused. If one's first introduction to them is satisfactory, there is no need to fear treachery later on, the first meeting being the crucial test.

For a change I spent a night on one of the native racks in preference to the floor, and found it quite comfortable ; these are built with a slight inclination and support the body only as far as the knees, the ankles resting on another horizontal pole secured to two uprights about a foot and a half away from the end of the rack. It sounds as if it might be a very uncomfortable position to rest in, but it is really not at all bad ; besides, it has the additional advantage that a fire can be maintained on the ground under the feet of the sleeper, and so, when the nights are cool, his extremities are kept fairly warm.

Muñoz and myself started off again early the following morning ; high hills hemmed us in on all sides and the scenery was very fine ; only the low clouds prevented our seeing much of it. It was not actually raining, but it looked as if it did not need much encouragement. The river had risen to a maximum during the night and was now falling away rapidly. I thought if only it would dry up altogether how nice it would be to get out and walk the rest of the way. Huatinge and Yampes did less work each day, but they afforded



AN INDIAN MAIDEN FROM THE PASTAZA RIVER.

BREAKING UP A MEETING

me much entertainment and were extremely friendly ; they chatted away continually like monkeys, as if we had all the time in the world at our disposal. We would stop first at one hut, then at another, for visits with their friends, which, when totalled up, ran into a matter of hours.

One shanty in particular was the cause of our losing a great deal of time ; a fallen tree-trunk acted as a landing-stage and others served the purpose of a pathway up the steep bank. I waited patiently in the canoe till half an hour had elapsed and as then there were no signs of my friends returning, I scaled the slippery tree-trunk to see if I could not break up the meeting. The *cholos* of the mountains are difficult people to handle, but Indians are worse ; they look upon a journey such as this as a form of holiday, and if one gets cross and tries to urge them forward they slip off during the night and you wake to find yourself deserted ; in many cases you will also find your present of beads returned, adding insult to injury. In this instance I started bartering for some bananas and managed to procure twenty good-sized ones for a couple of needles ; then I got them carried down to the canoe, the whole family occupying itself with the task ; in this manner I was gradually able to get my men to their seats, and taking advantage of a temporary lull in the conversation, we slipped off before they had thought of anything more to talk about.

In the afternoon the river started to rise once more and the rain came down worse than ever ; in a few moments I was drenched, and it was good-bye to peace and comfort for the rest of

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the day. At 3 p.m., or maybe earlier, we pulled up in a backwater. To my surprise, Huatinge and Yampes, all smiles and laughter, landed and threaded their way off amongst the dripping vegetation. They came back almost immediately with other Indians and pointed to the rising waters. "*Yurmi!*" they shouted in chorus, "*yurmi catzuhan ah-ha!*"

It looked like another conference, so I nodded as if I understood what they said, and with that they made the canoe fast to an overhanging bough, shouldered the cargo and off they went. There was nothing to do but follow with good grace, and probably it was for the best, as we had passed a very bad passage in the river called Papa-ung, escaping a whirlpool by the narrowest possible margin; with the river in flood, and the rain coming down in torrents, it was not desirable to go any further.

Sure enough our footsteps brought us to a hut, where we were accorded a very warm welcome. Huatinge was an old friend of the household, and we were therefore received on the same footing. Fish, yucas and bananas were laid before us, neatly wrapped up in leaves, and we sat ourselves down in a ring to partake of them; all food was served and eaten with the fingers, and I particularly remember being handed a fish by the tail; it struck me as a humorous way of serving it, and made me laugh to think what would be the effect at the Berkeley or some fashionable West-End restaurant if the waiter handed one a trout in such a manner.

Muñoz, sullen and ill-tempered, would not thaw out even in the friendly warmth of these wild but

A COMFORTABLE NIGHT

happy people of the forest ; he complained about this and that, and asked once more how much extra cash he was going to get for submitting to all these hardships on my account. I humoured him and promised him five pounds, as it was apparently my only hope of keeping him in a reasonable frame of mind.

After the repast I donned my clothes of yesterday, which were not quite so wet as those I had on, then got close to a fire, so as to dry off as much as possible before turning in for the night. The house was not up-to-date like others I had seen ; there were no walls, only a roof, but a very good roof, and that was all I cared about. As my clothing dried out I took on a new lease of life and the remaining hours of daylight passed off merrily enough. Once more I noticed the good physique and cleanliness of those around me ; they were far ahead of the mountain *cholos*, whose filth and dirty rags may be picturesque at a distance, but do not bear close inspection.

I counted eight sleeping racks in all, each complete with its fire, foot-rest and dog, the latter being provided only where there were women. The dogs were savage little beasts resembling mongrel foxes, but they were well trained, and if anyone approached a rack that did not belong there they would bark furiously, even if it were a member of the same household. Should an outsider come to the house, then all the dogs started to bark the minute he came inside ; in this fashion it was possible to find out who were members of the family and who were strangers.

As usual, when we stopped at a hut, our hour

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

of departure was very much delayed, due to the unending chatter that went on. At this place our friends enjoyed our company so much that we could not get rid of them, and they piled into a couple of canoes when we started on our way, sticking by us for more than half a day. Huatinge and Yampes shouted and laughed like the rest of them, paying no more heed to the canoe than if we were punting quietly on the Thames; sometimes they ceased work altogether and casually looked at a bird in the tree-top or else related a story; meanwhile the canoe would be drifting broadside on across some dangerous rocks and rapidly getting out of control. At the last moment they would realise the danger, and with frenzied shouts seize their paddles, avoiding an accident by a matter of seconds. It was trying, to say the least, as I had no wish to see my cargo again deposited in the raging waters; yet there was nothing else to do but sit horribly still and just wait.

We stopped about noon at the largest house of any I ever saw amongst the Aguarunas. The owner had the distinction of being the only old savage I came across, still hale and hearty, able to keep his offspring together, and hence get such a huge establishment as this built. Greatly to my relief, our friends who had been keeping us company decided to return to their own fireside, and we were left in peace for an hour; then another grand pow-wow was held near Cocamshi, on a gravel-bar, where over a hundred Indians had collected—men, women and children. It was a most interesting gathering, and with such an abundance of material

HOSTILE COUNTRY

at hand, I certainly deplored the loss of my camera.

The last night which we spent in company with our Indians from Huaracayo was out in the open ; on other occasions we had always managed to find some friendly roof to shelter under, but we were approaching hostile country now and Huatinge was cautiousness itself. After great deliberation we pitched our camp on a sand-bar at the foot of the large and menacing whirlpool of Huaqui Chaqui. It was not altogether satisfactory, as the Indians held a consultation, and then Yampes made a stealthy survey of our position ; having reconnoitred, he returned, and it was decided to shift camp once more to an island which apparently suited them better, since we made a fire and prepared for the night.

For once it did not rain—at least not heavily—and we slept soundly. Each day our progress had been less and less ; if the same proportion were maintained I estimated that we would cover a distance of two miles on this our last day. We broke camp with the first streak of dawn and for over two hours battled in the giant whirlpool. The river at this point describes a sharp bend, less than 90°, and the channel, which is very confined, is girt with masses of rock against which the water hurls itself with unrelenting fury, boiling and foaming as if in a giant cauldron. By dint of much perseverance we were able to make our way past it in safety and without injury to the cargo. Above the whirlpool the river spread out over sand and gravel bars, becoming wide and rambling. For an hour we poled our way through

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

the swift and shallow water, until we encountered a stream coming in on our right which my companions called the Cusu. At its confluence with the Marañon were two Indian huts strategically placed on hill-tops commanding a clear view of the river.

The nose of our canoe slid up on to the soft mud near one of them ; Huatinge and Yampes jumped on shore and laughingly told us that this was as far as they would go. We tried to persuade them to change their savage minds, but no offers of beads or buttons had any effect ; apparently they had enemies higher up and were not disposed to run any risks. To emphasise the point they deposited our belongings on shore, and without further ceremony pushed the canoe away from the bank ; a friendly nod, and they were gone—never to be seen again.

With the exception of a few women and children, all the inhabitants of the two huts were up the Cusu fishing—and as further progress was impossible until they returned, we sat down patiently to wait. About one o'clock they came back, and when we made our wants known there was no difficulty in procuring adequate transportation—in fact, there were too many applicants, and we ended by giving presents all round. After a few trinkets had passed hands, our fleet of five tiny canoes set out ; the one I travelled in was not only very small, but we had the wife of one of the warriors stowed away in the centre. She was quite graceful, and occupied her time killing the flies that settled on her husband's back—this being quite an important duty of a wife in these parts. By nightfall we had

PONGO OF UTA

covered a considerable distance and our five canoes were tied up at a comfortable hut for the night, where we could get out of the rain and sleep well.

Yet again we bartered for a canoe and Indians, and were successful in arranging for another's day journey up-stream, ; on this occasion it was without any comely damsel, of which I was glad, as to my way of thinking we had quite enough dead weight to carry as it was, without adding to it. The rain held off for some time, but my hopes of a perfect day were not realised : a downpour set in suddenly. and so intense was it that I had to revert to my usual task of baling in order to keep ourselves afloat. I was beginning to understand now why the savages always looked so clean.

We made good progress, working well all the time, in spite of the rain, and reaching the foot of another gorge called Uta about 2 p.m. The last mile round an " S " bend took all the surplus energy out of the Indians ; it was a very difficult passage, and in the last part we encountered some large rocks in mid-channel around which the waters poured and gurgled with diabolical significance. Our two braves decided that they had done as much as they cared to, and at the first hut we encountered they put us ashore. Before returning down-stream they handed us over to another Indian, who had come to see us land, indicating that we could stay at his house and he would see us on our way the following day.

Such was the contrariness of the weather that the moment we were under cover the rain stopped, and I was treated to one of those common but no less wonderful sights of local cloud formation

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

which never ceased to fascinate me. The last drop of water had barely touched the ground before the sun came out, and from its home in the celestial blue set the whole forest steaming in its molten rays. From the tree-tops long attenuated streaks of gossamer mist rose heavenwards, moving idly hither and thither amongst the hills without rhyme or reason, or collecting like veils of fleecy whiteness in the soft green hollows between. Pulsating with life, they rose and fell in undulating waves of exquisite beauty, till out of the bewildered landscape, distorted and blurred in the humid heat, a fragment of snow-white mist, caught in some gentle current of the upper air, drifted apart from the rest, and, behold! a cloud was born that floated off into space, a vision of intangible, indescribable loveliness.

From the contemplation of such fanciful thoughts I had to bring myself back to more mundane things and displayed a few beads to raise the interest of our host in to-morrow's journey. He was not moved by the sight of them. Little by little I increased the size of the pile, adding needles, cartridge cases, and other things. At last he embraced the lot, but I shook my head. It was too much for one man. He thereupon divided the pile into three big heaps and one little one. To the first three he pointed, saying, "*Ticachi Aguaruna*," and to the smaller one, "*Nua*," slapping his chest and waving his arm twice over his head, meaning that three men and one woman would go two days up-stream.

I waved my hand over my head four times, to intimate that I wanted him to accompany me four

TRADING WITH SAVAGES

days, but he shook his head slowly and pointed south with an upward wave of his arm, then clasped both hands to his forehead, all of which, being translated, meant that we could not go more than two days by river, after which we must get out and walk, carrying our bundles on our backs. Still anxious to conserve my stock of beads, I separated a few articles from each pile and declared myself agreeable to trade for what was left, but he took back some empty cartridge cases. I nodded my head in agreement, and all was settled.

Had I known the kind of canoe I was to travel in I might not have been so generous in my dealings ; it proved to be the smallest of any we had employed up till now, with a bad crack in the stern, plastered over with mud, which needed frequent renewing. In addition the two other Indians were mere boys and the women rather fat. It seemed to be the irony of Fate that the greater became our need for a good canoe the worse became the craft we eventually chartered. Imagine a small cockleshell like this carrying my cargo and six people—the very thought was enough to upset it ! Choice never seemed to come our way, and in this case, like the rest, we had to take what we could get and be thankful.

During the next two days, which were our last on the restless waters of the Marañon, fortune smiled upon us for a change ; the river was exceptionally low, and in consequence we made our way through the *pongo* of Uta without incident to mar our progress ; many dangerous passages were rendered less risky and many gravel-bars were exposed which otherwise would have been

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

covered with water. Over these I could walk for miles—a doubtful pleasure, since my only shoes had long since disintegrated and I was forced to go barefooted. Much time was wasted hunting for clay with which to stuff up the crack in our hull; a single application lasted about half an hour, by which time it had dissolved and the water would come pouring in.

Each day we were treated to the usual downpours of rain, but they started early and let up by evening, so that we could make our shelter for the night in comfort before it got too dark. Our first camp was on an island called Timashtu, the country roundabout being flat and quite close to a high ridge of hills which loomed up to the south-west. While the boys were spearing fish for our evening meal the rest of us followed up some newly made jaguar tracks, as we did not wish to be disturbed by any feline visitors during the hours of darkness. These animals are not always as dangerous as they are supposed to be, but they have a habit of indulging in the most awful noises at night which make sleep almost impossible. As we were on an island it was easy to clear it of undesirables, and our efforts were rewarded by seeing quite a big fellow break cover and swim ashore.

In the cool of the evening I strolled off by myself along the margin of a quiet backwater which lay behind our camp. I wanted to be entirely alone for a change—away from Muñoz and his complainings, away from the Indians and their unintelligible grunts, away from the gurgling river, our camp, and everything that reminded me of our past struggles. I wanted to see the sun set

REFLECTIONS

gently into the west over the brooding forest, to see the colour of the flaming sky reflected in the tranquil waters, and then, as the mysterious shadows of night crept out from behind the hills, my spirit would be at rest and I could contemplate the future in peace.

It was exactly twenty-four days ago that I had boarded a frail canoe at Barranca and with half-drunken companions entrusted my life to the tender mercies of the Upper Amazon. There had been nothing tender about the treatment meted out to me since that time. I had watched the river get smaller and swifter day by day, more turbulent and more aggressive ; I had watched each change with varying sentiments of interest and wonder, anxiety and disdain. I had learnt the dangers that lurked round rocky salients, what evils lay hidden under the innocent ripple, what trivial errors brought disaster upon the unwary, and on top of it all I had learnt to hate the river because, like some animated being, it had opposed me at every turn, tried to rob me of my possessions, tried to strangle me in its subtle grip ; but to-morrow at this hour—if I understood my Indians aright—the victory would be mine. I could then turn my back on my old enemy for ever and walk—yes, walk—through the cool forest carpeted with soft leaves which would rest my aching feet ; no more hard rocks or loose gravel to stumble over, no more scorching sun to burn and blister ; just cool shade and contentment, with the end of my journey almost in sight. What a thought !

Our last day passed off smoothly enough ; the Indians took things very leisurely, their eyes and

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

attention being everywhere except in the boat. Birds and animals which one would hardly think worth noticing afforded these simple people unending entertainment. The river as usual swept onward giving forth a sound of escaping steam, caused by the loose gravel carried along its bed by the swift current. Many times it looked as if we could not advance another inch against the green waters streaked with foam, but in the end we won through the worst passages in safety, getting nearer and nearer our goal every hour.

At the confluence of a river called the Imaza we followed a narrow channel on our right, and in so doing cut a big corner that saved us an immense amount of work. At another I followed a dried-up channel on foot and found myself back on the bank of the main river within ten minutes. I waited nearly an hour before the canoe had been hauled round the bend to the same spot. Rain had been falling heavily most of the day, but the sun blazed forth at the last moment, drying our clothes out thoroughly before landing.

It was about five o'clock when we shot round a promontory and up into a backwater which proved to be the mouth of a small stream coming in on our left. There were evidences of Indians, and a pathway led up the steep bank to an abandoned shelter. In this remote spot Muñoz and myself finally came to rest, and were told that if we wanted to go further we would have to walk. Before we could gather any more details from our companions they and their patched-up cockleshell of a canoe were off down-stream with the full force of the current behind them.

NO MORE CANOES

Thus ended my journey by canoe, and I was not sorry. Heavy and continual rains, with little to eat, did not add to the pleasure of travelling, but apart from that it was a nerve-racking task to sit in a leaky canoe patched up with clay and carrying a precious cargo that any minute might be hurled into the hungry waters through the carelessness of a few naked savages, to whom I entrusted my life for the price of some coloured beads, a needle and a rusty fish-hook.

CHAPTER XII

ROUGHLY two hundred and fifty miles in a straight line east of Paíta on the Pacific coast a small river, called Ipicus by the Indians, empties itself into the Marañon on the south bank. It is unknown to the outside world, not marked on any map, and so inconspicuous as to be of no consequence whatsoever.

Insignificant as this little stream may be in comparison with the agitated and turbulent waters of the Marañon that go sweeping by its mouth on their long journey to the Atlantic, every detail of it remains clearly impressed on my memory: the placid waters which flow leisurely over a somewhat muddy bottom, the dark forest which meets overhead forming a veritable tunnel of tropical vegetation, the few banana trees which grow on either bank where it joins the main river, and the small shelter which stands in a clearing on its western shore.

It was here that Muñoz and myself spent a couple of days endeavouring to procure Indians to carry our packs and show us a way through the uninhabited forest to Bellavista. It was here that the river and myself parted company for good, after an incessant hand-to-hand struggle lasting nearly four weeks—no wonder that the Ipicus

TUNDAI OR SIGNAL DRUM

stands out in large letters on my map as a stream of some importance.

There was yet one more stage to my journey across this vast expanse of little-known country which stretches between the Pongo de Manseriche and the Chinchipe river. Raimondi designates all of this area as unexplored, and even in these days of enlightenment it cannot be said to be much else. As, at the Great Barrier, I had lost contact with the outside world coming in from the Atlantic coast of South America, so in Bellavista I hoped to re-establish it again and cover the remainder of the distance to the Pacific in comparative ease.

Since passing the *pongo* of Uta two days ago we had not seen a living soul, but many eyes had seen us, and news of our arrival at the Ipicus was quickly spread abroad amongst the dwellers of the forest through the medium of the *tundai*, or signal drum. This ingenuous instrument is simply a hollow trunk, which, when hit, gives forth a peculiar resonant sound that has great carrying powers. By means of a recognised code the Indians are able to transmit messages to each other from house to house, or even over considerable distances, if atmospheric conditions are favourable.

While preparing for the night weird drummings on the *tundai* could be distinctly heard from many directions, which told us that, although no habitations were visible, the forest was well populated and we might expect early callers.

We were not disappointed ; by seven there was a fair-sized regiment of them about our shelter, some drawn by curiosity, others wanting to trade ; a few had bananas, and one man a *paujil*, a sort

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

of wild turkey that I exchanged for a tin can and a cartridge case.

Knowing that there would be delay in finding anyone willing to show us a way to the Chinchipe river, I lost no time in starting negotiations. To the first group of Aguarunas that had collected I said, in an enquiring tone, "Chinchipe?" and pointed west, but they shook their heads and waved their arms to the southward, which evidently meant that our course lay in a different direction to what I thought. Then as a feeler I held up some beads, and pointing to them and then to five Indians I said, "*Ticachi* Aguaruna *yurmi* Chinchipe"—which meant that I would give the beads to each Indian that would go with me to the Chinchipe river, but they only laughed as if it were a huge joke, so I got Muñoz to treat with them while I occupied my time to better advantage.

I estimated we would need five Indians in all to carry our cargo and the necessary food, but the chances of getting so many being small, I re-sorted the gear very carefully, discarding all useless articles, even the water-soaked box in which the now useless "movie" camera was carried was done away with and the instrument put in my waterproof bag instead. In this way the weight of our cargo was considerably reduced, and if we could solicit the services of four men all would be well. The things which were abandoned were not thrown away; when dealing with Indians everything is useful, and sometimes the most trivial articles have colossal value in the eyes of the savages.

Before evening Muñoz had been successful in persuading three men to join us, and the prices



A TREE FERN THIRTY FEET HIGH.

A FISH STORY

paid them show how values run. One came for a package of white beads, another for twenty rounds of .303 ammunition saved from the wreck (but quite useless, as I had no rifle), two fish-hooks, and a ball of string; the third received ten rounds of ammunition, some metal binding strips taken off a box, and a small mirror.

The next morning another hefty fellow who had been hanging around decided to join our party, his price being a few rounds of ammunition, some beads, a pair of cheap ear-rings, two old Kodak tins, and the sacking which had been wrapped round the discarded box containing the "movie" camera.

This was eminently satisfactory; all four men were of good physique, the weather was fine, and we would make an early start the next day. In addition there were prospects of a good afternoon's fishing up the Ipicus, which would bring in an additional food-supply for our journey.

An Indian does not fish for sport, but for the more natural motive that he wants something to eat. It is therefore immaterial to him how he sets about it so long as he can catch plenty with the least possible effort. A common but very effective method employed by savages in the river country is to barricade the mouth of a normally shallow creek up which fish have swum during a period of flood so as to avoid the muddy waters of the main river. Circumstances do not always permit of this being done, but if they do it usually means a pretty good haul when the flood subsides and leaves hundreds of fish stranded in the once more shallow waters above the barricade.

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

On this particular afternoon the Marañon had dropped five feet or more, and the Ipicus, whose mouth had been screened off when the flood was at its height, was alive with fish of all kinds unable to get back into deep water. Amidst shouts of glee and much enthusiasm the Indians raided the pools in which the fish had been entrapped, spearing them right and left; in many places they plunged bodily into the water and caught them by hand, flinging them on to the bank, where the children collected them in baskets. Men and women, divested of their scanty clothes, all assisted in the fray, and only stopped when each had as many as he or she could carry. There were about forty of us in all and we must have caught nearly five hundred fish of good size. Anything less than eight inches was thrown back as useless. In the evening we smoked fish for the journey ahead of us and ate as if we would never have another meal again for a week; thus thoroughly gorged we turned in to sleep.

For once in a while I spent a restless night, not from the effects of eating too much fish, but from listening to the rain sweeping over the illimitable forest, with periodic peals of thunder adding to the din. I had visions of being detained at this place for another day or two, which, with Muñoz in an ugly mood, was not at all to my liking. The direction in which his thoughts were moving was evident, and I realised that even a small delay might prove fatal to our interests.

At daybreak I got up and prepared another good meal of fish and awaited developments. To my great relief the rain stopped, and the Indians with

START OUT ON FOOT

whom we had bargained put in an appearance along with a host of friends. They brought with them long strips of bark, which were quickly made up into slings, so that each man could carry his load easily on his back, the main weight being taken by a broad band round the forehead.

After considerable talking everything was in order. We were ferried over the Ipicus, and with a few last words were soon lost to view. So it came about that after two days of the most delightful weather possible we bade farewell to the sunshine and open spaces of the river and plunged into the dismal depths of the great forest on our way to Bellavista.

We shaped our course to the southward over an invisible trail, keeping to the high ground as much as possible. There were eight of us in all, including two dusky beauties, and we trudged along in silence through the sombre shadows.

Barely an hour after our departure a booming sound in the distance, like the breaking of surf on some far-off shore, proclaimed the advent of rain. No violent wind heralded its approach, as is usual in the mountains; here in the sultry atmosphere of the woods it bore down on us like an overwhelming flood, until we were enveloped in a drenching downpour that had all the appearance of lasting a lifetime. The Indians, although nude, disliked getting wet as much as I did, and remained under improvised palm shelters for an hour till the worst had passed.

At last, after what seemed like an interminable delay, we moved forward again, the savages displaying very little energy even for the light loads which

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they were carrying. We wound our way amongst the dense forest growth, circling fallen trees, pushing our way through thickets, and stopping very frequently to talk or adjust packs. To me it seemed that our rate of advancement was ridiculously slow and exasperating in the extreme. No accurate check could be kept of our direction either, except by closely following the contour of the ground ; for every minute we moved south, at least ten minutes would be taken up going east or west to avoid obstacles.

After crossing several little brooks we once more encountered the Ipicus, now swollen to a remarkable size as the result of the rain ; we waded across, but only to plunge into it again half a mile further on. On this occasion it was not a case of fording it in a decent manner, but we actually walked up it for over a quarter of a mile, with the water at times reaching to our armpits. Upon clambering out we followed up a series of ridges till we gained the summit of some hills running east and west. It was about four when we reached the crest of the divide and the Indians at once prepared a *tambo* for the night.

I made no objection, as a good sleep and some dry clothes would put me in a better frame of mind to handle Muñoz ; he had hardly spoken all day, and when he did it was only about the hardships he was enduring and how little he was getting in return for it. Before turning in he once more held me up for a promise of money when we reached Bellavista, and I was obliged to raise the figure to £10 in order to make him content. I would have promised him any amount for that

MUÑOZ TURNS HIGHWAYMAN

matter, as I had quite made up my mind to give him a sound hiding when we finally set foot at our destination.

The rain held off most of the night, but started in the early morning and prevented our moving for a couple of hours. We were about to get under weigh when Muñoz again put forward his claim, only this time he was a little more explicit and said he wanted his reward at once for the reason that we were only eight days from our destination and he was afraid that when we got to Bellavista my promises would be as the wind and I would not pay him anything. This being the truth I was naturally annoyed, and told him for the last time that he would get nothing until he had fulfilled the terms of his agreement, and he had better make up his mind to that. What did the black son of a mongrel do but turn on me saying that as I was not going to give him anything he was going off with the Indians and would leave me to die like a dog in the woods.

He put his threat into immediate execution, and while he was talking to the Aguarunas I felt down for my small automatic which had escaped the whirlpool, together with six rounds of ammunition that were in the magazine. I asked myself how far I was justified in putting a bullet through him. He was leaving me to a fate which in 999 cases out of a 1,000 meant death in about its worst form. The verdict was to shoot the moment he actually started off; one fact alone caused me to hesitate. If I killed him I knew the savages would desert me, if not kill me, because Muñoz had given them all the pretty beads and trinkets they possessed

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and was therefore looked upon as a friend. This meant I would never get out of the place alive under any possible condition. On the other hand, if I let Muñoz go I might find my way back to the river and there prevail upon some other savages to conduct me to the Chinchipe.

The chance was a very remote one at the best of times, but rendered much more so because I had very few articles left with which to barter. It was less than 1 in a 1,000, but I gave Muñoz the benefit of the doubt, as that seemed to offer the one and only avenue of escape from a very serious predicament. Besides, it was consoling to think that if I got out alive I could come back again at some later date and see that he got the reward he deserved.

Before I realised what was happening Muñoz and the Indians went filing off through the trees, leaving me seated on my bundles under the shelter. Wild ideas came into my head—I would not allow the scoundrel to get off free—I would put an ounce of lead through his villainous head and take my chance of getting out alive. Reason, however, spoke differently and urged me to let matters stand as they were—but I would give him a thrashing anyhow, I said to myself. There would be no harm in that.

Jumping up from my seat I ran after him, calling out his name as loudly as I could. It seemed almost sacrilege to break the silence of the forest, and the sound of my own voice startled me as it echoed back and forth.

It began to look as if he had gone out of hearing, and I was getting angry with myself for letting him

MUÑOZ GETS A THRASHING

go, when I heard some one approaching. It was he right enough, with a leer on his face that only increased my annoyance, and when he muttered something about the *señor* changing his mind I took him firmly by the neck and shook him like a rat. My blood was up and I could have shaken an elephant with equal facility. He seized my right thumb and pulled it out of joint, but at the time I hardly noticed it. I was like a boiler with the safety valve wide open and the pent-up steam rushing out; nothing could stop me. I went on shaking him; his struggles became weaker, until, when the Indians came up, he gave a few last gurgles, and with eyes starting out of his head collapsed in a heap on the ground.

For a moment it looked as if my enthusiasm had got the better of me and that I had shaken the life out of his miserable body. The Aguarunas were evidently not sure whether it would be best to run away or kill me, but fear of myself was the governing impulse which held them, and I did not break the spell by trying to talk.

I squatted on the ground to see what would happen. They followed my example, and together we watched Muñoz gradually revive.

The savage mind does not understand the word "compromise," that dangerous rock of civilisation upon which so many sound ideas are wrecked; if the savage hates he kills; if he does not hate he is friendly; so that the Anglo-Saxon idea of handling a fellow roughly, without actually killing him, is incomprehensible in the extreme to his primitive mind.

In ten minutes Muñoz showed signs of life, and

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as soon as he struggled to his feet he tried to slip his long-bladed *machete* between my ribs. In his feeble state I held him off easily until he gave up the idea as useless. My next move was to give him the £10 so as to get him to proceed, with the ultimate idea of administering another thrashing at Bellavista and making him disgorge. Unfortunately the moment he got the cash he slipped off with the Indians and left me for good.

Several times I thought I might have acted differently, but on turning over the situation in my mind I felt sure that I played my cards to the best possible advantage. He was intent upon making a break and getting some money; had we not parted company when we did I would have had his knife in my back one night while asleep, which would have been much worse.

When the silence of the forest had once more closed down on the scene I felt absolutely bewildered and stunned by the atmosphere of desolation which swept over me. What was I to do? A difficult question to answer, seeing that no food had been left behind. With a penknife and a small automatic carrying six rounds of ammunition, the prospects of procuring any were zero.

Still there was no need to give up in despair. I was in a good physical condition and able to stand considerable privation if necessary. I soon decided that the best course to pursue was to make straight for the river, and once there work my way along its banks until I came to the Ipicus, where I might procure other Indians to help me.

It was easier said than done, as the likelihood of

finding my way back along the invisible pathway we had come by was so remote that I would have to strike a compass course due north instead and take the chance of encountering good ground on the way.

Before setting out I piled up all my belongings neatly under the shelter and covered them over with a number of large leaves so as to keep them dry. The lighter I was laden the more rapid my progress; therefore I only took my note-book, ink, and a few film tins; these, with my light blanket, made up my entire cargo.

Before starting I wrote up a very careful account of what had transpired, making several copies. I inserted them in the tins, which I taped up securely, my idea being that if the worst came to the worst I would drop them in the river and so inform the outside world of what had happened—assuming, of course, that they were picked up. It seemed just as well to write out the story while it was clear in my mind and I could think coherently, rather than wait until I was in the last stages of exhaustion.

Arrangements all carefully made I set off downhill, guided by my pocket-compass, and with a grim determination to get back to the Marañon at all costs. Twenty-four hours ago I had been hurrying away from it with all speed, now I was directing my footsteps back to it again with even greater energy and anxiety. Such is the way of the world!

My journey through the forest will always be recalled as a prolonged nightmare of indescribable magnitude.

With the assistance of knives and axes it is difficult enough to make any headway amongst such a riot

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of jungle-growth, but without these tools it is well nigh impossible to move in any direction, let alone keep a definite compass course such as I hoped to maintain.

Rather than walk round the numerous obstacles that barred the way and so lose my bearings, I scrambled through or over them, tearing my clothes and cutting my flesh on the innumerable spines which protruded from almost every tree and plant. The vines that trailed underfoot in all directions tripped me up at every turn, throwing me headlong into thickets of thorny undergrowth. Every effort to save myself only resulted in getting my hands more painfully slashed, for even those plants which looked harmless enough had great spikes—long and sharp as needles, concealed under their innocent foliage, ready to cut and tear at the slightest provocation.

After a few hours I became absolutely terrified of touching anything for fear of incurring further wounds ; should a branch happen to be smooth for a change, likely as not there would be thousands of ants crawling over it, and they bit and stung like creeping fire.

On one memorable occasion I examined a branch minutely before gripping it to help myself over a bad mud-hole, such as poisonous reptiles frequently inhabit. Seeing that it was free from both thorns and ants I grasped it confidently to swing myself across. As it bent under my weight a cloud of black wasps, whose nest I had not observed at the end of the bough, encircled my head and I fell in the very sludge I was trying to avoid. Beating the air frantically to keep off my assailants, I

TERRORS OF THE FOREST

scrambled to more solid ground. Branches flew back in my face, blinding me with their blows. My foot got caught in some roots, and to prevent a fall I clutched madly at a creeper that hung like a huge rope from the trees above. With an appalling crash I pulled the whole forest down on top of me—a mass of rotten timber. From under the debris I crawled; the wasps had given up the chase, but ants were running all over me, and it was some time before I could rid myself of them and collect my distracted senses sufficiently to proceed. What between ants, thorns, wasps, and innumerable other unknown things which bit and scratched, I was being quickly driven into a state of frenzy.

The hour was now getting late; my course lay uphill, and it was evident that I could not hope to reach the river without spending at least one night in the forest.

At the first open spot I collected a few large leaves by way of a mattress to rest on, and with several fronds from nearby palms cut with my penknife, I constructed a fair shelter to keep off the rain.

During the day I had crossed a stream, and in so doing had lost my small automatic with its six rounds of ammunition. I was therefore left to face all the terrors of a jungle night with no means of protection whatsoever except a small pocket-knife.

Exhausted and aching in every limb I lay down and tried to rest, but the maddening quietude of the surroundings brought no solace to my overwrought brain; the absolute death-like stillness

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only accentuated my loneliness and emphasised the insignificance of man who pits his strength against the overpowering jungle. In my passage through the forest the noise I myself made seemed to be companionable, but now, as I lay still, not a sound was heard unless it was a branch creaking with age, a falling leaf, or some mournful isolated cry of a bird that echoed through the forest like a lost soul.

The daylight faded away little by little, the white trunks of certain trees stood out in ghost-like relief from the rest of their fellows. Not a tremor or even a rustle was perceptible in the green canopy overhead. Like a funeral pall it descended lower and lower till in the darkness which ensued I felt strangled and suffocated beneath.

At intervals I woke, startled by trivial sounds. Something was walking through the forest, possibly a jaguar or a large snake wriggling through the slime. I distinctly heard the movement of leaves and the snapping of twigs. Whether it was a small animal close by or a large one far away I knew not. All sense of proportion had deserted me ; all I knew was that at any moment something might creep over me—I held my breath and perspired freely—the strain was too great—I stood up. Minutes of suspense followed, then the noise would cease and I lay down again.

The next instant I was startled out of my senses. The leaves close at hand rustled violently, and something cold and clammy flopped over my face. A sickening shudder ran through me from head to foot, as I tried to beat off my assailant, but it was nothing—only one of my palm leaves that had

ONCE MORE ON THE RIVER'S BANK

come adrift and fallen across me. In the dark it might have been anything.

So this was the beautiful forest which I had been looking forward to travelling through in peace and quietness. I laughed at the thought of it, and burying my head under my blanket tried to obliterate all consciousness of the outside world.

Daylight returned, and with it new hope and energy to help me in my quest for the river. I set out at once. Again I headed due north over the ridge and down the other side, no horizon to encourage, no patch of blue sky overhead to cheer me on my way. Cracks and openings there were in plenty, and occasionally shafts of sunlight where the forest was more open, but it filtered down into my world as through prison bars.

I groped my way along slowly, laboriously, fearful of touching anything, and hoping against hope to encounter the river any moment. At about four the sound of running water was unmistakable. My energy revived immediately, and pushing forward with renewed vigour a flood of daylight burst upon me. I was on the banks of the Marañon.

It was five or six days ago since the Marañon and myself had parted company, at which time we were hardly on speaking terms, yet my joy at seeing it again on this occasion was unfeigned; it was like meeting an old friend.

It still gave forth the same well-known sound and was just as truculent as ever. On all sides were high hills, unfamiliar and thickly wooded, but it was too late to explore further, and I contented myself with preparing a shelter for the night on a

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little stretch of soft sand. Here I slept soundly, away from the horrors of the forest and with the comforting thought that to-morrow I would just follow the river bank to the Ipicus, and in so doing encounter Indians who would assist me on my way ; the rest would be easy.

With a light heart and empty stomach I set out early the following morning, but within an hour I was back where I started from in the depths of black despair.

Fate had played me a cruel trick. The banks of the river were high masses of rock and quite impassable ; in fact, they were a more effective barrier than any forest. To further add to my difficulties, a spur of hills intervened between me and my goal, which, in my weakened state, I could never hope to cross. I was therefore committed to the only alternative of remaining where I was, on the offchance that some passing Indian might come to my rescue.

I figured out that with reasonable good luck I could sit still for at least two weeks with only water to drink, whereas to launch out into the forest again meant physical exhaustion and madness within two days. At the time I felt confident that an Indian canoe would be sure to pass sooner or later, since many had passed the Ipicus during my two days' stay on its banks. Little did I know that not far round the bend was a cascade of such proportions that even an Indian would not attempt to pass it, except once in a blue moon ; but in blissful ignorance of this I settled down to watch and wait.

The past two days had revealed to me an aspect

AN INVISIBLE MONSTER

of the forest which I had not come in contact with before except for a brief hour or two after disaster had overtaken my party in the whirlpool. So long as all goes well there is much to please the eye and charm the senses in this vast jungle-garden of the Amazon, but to the man who is so unfortunate as to lose his way, or be abandoned by his men, it becomes a veritable nightmare, the personification of all that is ghastly and appalling : one cannot make the words too strong.

Alone in these dense green solitudes, harmless as they may appear, it is the unknown, the unseen, that terrifies. Man feels as if he were battling with an invisible monster even more horrible than the river, because the latter attacks in the open and its death stroke is relatively quick, whereas the forest ensnares its victim in the dark, and slowly draws its coils tighter, till death comes as a merciful relief.

On the surface around the tree-tops the forest is beautiful ; birds and butterflies disport themselves in the sunshine, nature is seen at her best. Beneath, away down amongst the roots, it is one hideous struggle for predominance in the vegetable world. Man may hack a passage through, but he cannot compete single-handed against the unseen ; his track is soon grown over again, and only by constant work can it be kept reasonably clear of obstructions. To flounder off the path is suicide ; it is only a matter of time before he gets caught in the web that the green monster has woven about him ; each struggle to get free only entangles him to a worse degree, and robs him of further powers of resistance. The law of the

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forest is the same as in other walks of life ; victory goes to the strong, and in this case it is man who ultimately succumbs.

The first few days my desire for food was absolutely painful ; nothing could be found, not even berries or nuts, to satisfy my longing. Then, as my insides collapsed and became accustomed to an empty state, a vague drowsy feeling stole over me that was not disagreeable. My mind, instead of getting confused, became clear as crystal, and with no physical exertion to weaken me I could think with precision on most involved subjects.

Clear as my mind was, it was with the feelings of a hunted animal that I crouched every night under my rude shelter of leaves. Back of me lay the silent forest with its haunting memories, in front the river, still waiting with diabolical patience. Which of the two would claim me in the end ? I knew not, cared not, my only wish was to communicate the real details of my misfortune to the outside world.

Muñoz would spread stories abroad that I had died of fever, or else been killed by savages, and the thought of it rankled within me. If I could but inform my friends of what had really occurred, what cared I about death so long as I willed it. I would not be drowned by the river or strangled by the forest. If I was to die at all it would be by starvation. Life would fade away as the morning mist at my own bidding. The sensation would not be unpleasant, now that the keen desire for food had gone and I was reconciled to an ultimate conscious death undisturbed by horrors.

During my entire sojourn in this lonely spot



A MURATO FAMILY.

A JAGUAR'S VISIT

there was nothing to disturb my peace of mind except the small flies, and they pestered me to death during the daytime without intermission. Small, stingless bees, harmless but daring beyond belief, also made themselves objectionable. They would crawl into my ears, up my nose, or walk over any exposed flesh with the greatest impunity. So persistent were they in their attentions that the only way to get rid of them was to slaughter them wholesale.

Only once had I occasion to be really terrified. It was at night, when a large jaguar appeared out of the shadows, walked over my prostrate form, sniffed about and sat down nearby. I was literally paralysed with terror and could not move a muscle. The next morning I was inclined to consider it a revolting dream, but tracks in the sand soon disillusioned me on that point and told their own story.

It rained heavily most of the time, generally at night, causing an unutterable discomfort both in mind and body. Drip, drip, drip, on all sides, hour after hour, with mechanical regularity that was enough to drive one insane. The last sound in my ears before going to sleep was the rain dripping off my shelter. "Thank God," I said, "I am under cover; to-morrow it will be fine," and with that thought I would close my ears to the dismal noise about me. In the grey hours of early dawn I would awake to find the rain still falling. For some time I would lie quiet, listening to the unending patter on the trees. In an hour or so it would cease, but for thirty minutes water would continue to drip off every leaf and twig of the forest. Slower

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and slower came the splashes, drip—drop—drip—drop, till the sun would steal forth from behind the clouds and I would shuffle off to my usual position on the gravel-bar to watch the river—to watch for those Indians who would eventually come along and rescue me.

So the hours passed, lengthening into days, until nearly a week had elapsed. Frequently during that time I thought I saw a canoe come careering around the bend. For a few moments my hopes would run high, then disappointment would follow as I realised my mistake.

On the fifth day there was no doubt about it, and the long-looked-for canoe was coming; deliverance was at hand. Down to the water's edge I rushed, shouting and waving my arms. Nearer and nearer it came, a man standing in the stern, swaying to and fro as his small craft rocked in the racing waters, but, alas! it was only another disappointment to add to my already long list. It turned out to be the trunk of a great tree, with a broken branch sticking up at one end, and I walked slowly back to my seat.

It began to look as if this indeed was to be my last resting-place; nine days had passed since Muñoz had abandoned me in the forest. I had found nothing to eat meanwhile. Physically, I was very much weaker, and the chances of being rescued were daily becoming more remote. Thanks to keeping quiet and not getting excited I was still in full possession of my faculties, and my mind was quite clear, but this state of affairs could not last indefinitely. If help did not come soon the tins containing the statement of my misfortunes, addressed

THE END IN SIGHT

to Colonel Soyer at Iquitos, would have to be thrown into the river on the chance of being picked up three hundred or four hundred miles further down-stream and forwarded to their destination. By this means I never hoped to bring anyone to my assistance, but I did hope to inform the outside world of what had happened, and so contradict the stories Muñoz would circulate. If I could but be sure of their doing that I would be satisfied.

Gazing at the river had become a mechanical habit. I had almost ceased to expect help in any shape or form, and the prospects of starving to death no longer caused me any alarm.

I put in the time thinking of my friends and the pleasant events of long ago. Although the past was becoming more remote, it seemed to be wrapping itself up more intimately with the future in a most remarkable way. It was as if my life was running backwards, a curious sensation not easily described, but a feeling somewhat akin to it is experienced when seated in a train standing still in a station. On the adjacent track another train starts to move, you think it is you who are going backwards ; in reality it is the other train moving forward.

In a similar manner, as I looked at life from the confined quarters of that gravel-bar, I imagined my world was going backwards, and that I was acquiring a new faculty of moving out of time with my surroundings. Before long the past, present, and future would all be merged into one—time would cease to exist, the clock of life would stop.

CHAPTER XIII

ON October 6th, while seated as usual on my log, staring vacantly at the undulating waters of the river and my thoughts thousands of miles away, I was startled by defiant shouts from behind. Swinging round in my seat I saw a party of savages emerge, as if daring me to come on and fight. So unmistakably hostile was their attitude that had my small automatic with its six rounds of ammunition being available I would have used it without hesitation. As it was, Providence had relieved me of it during my march through the forest, and if I was to save myself now it would only be by the exercise of friendly tactics.

There was no chance of the Indians springing a surprise attack, since I was out of range of their weapons and the gravel-bar afforded them no cover. It would be a case of fighting out in the open or not at all. This was decidedly in my favour, as every move I made would be clearly seen and less liable to misinterpretation in consequence. To have advanced towards this excited pack of savages, even with friendly intent, would have been construed as a form of attack ; to have run away, like an enemy trying to seek cover, would have been just as bad. Hence there was nothing else to do but sit absolutely still.

ATTACKED BY INDIANS

Have you ever come across a rabbit, when out shooting, crouching in the grass at your feet and refusing to bolt? You try to make it run for its life and give it a so-called sporting chance—and if it does, what happens? Unless you are a very bad shot it goes to swell the number of the slain. If that same rabbit had remained passive, as they often do, you would probably have caught it alive, put it in your pocket, and taken it home for the children to play with. Human motives are the same all the world over—so, like the rabbit, I refused to run. Just to show them that I was alive and not up to any tricks, I pointed alternately to my stomach and my mouth, then hung my head dejectedly—in plain English, I was tired and hungry.

The Indians stopped their hullabaloo, came a little nearer, and then retired to the forest to think matters over; they had never seen an animal act like that before, and were not certain what to do. A few moments later they came out again, and once more I made signs of being hungry, whereupon one of their party, a little bolder than the rest, came forward cautiously and held out a toasted banana. I took the proffered food, and, having a tattered khaki handkerchief in my pocket, gave it to him in exchange. This established the fact that I was a perfect gentleman, and the rest of the band gathered round without fear. I asked for more food, but they only waved their hands over their heads, saying *Cashi*, meaning to-morrow, and then unceremoniously slipped off quietly into the forest.

It was just as well that I had not received a more bountiful supply at the outset, for the pain caused

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

by the solitary banana prying open the shrunken crevices of my stomach was very great indeed. It was also fortunate that I had had a handkerchief handy, since it had helped to cement friendly relations quicker than anything else. It must be remembered that savages rarely, if ever, dispose of their belongings without bargaining for something else in return. If they do appear to make a present it usually means that they are not particular what they get in exchange—that is to say, they expect “something,” but leave it to you as to what that “something” should be.

About ten o'clock the following day my savage friends returned again, only this time without any of the shouting that had characterised their first appearance. They brought with them a small supply of yucas, for which I gave them a film tin; then when I had eaten they beckoned me to follow through the forest. We twisted in and out amongst the trees, working our way by easy stages up the slope to the east and down the other side. It seemed a long walk for my weary bones, but we took it very leisurely, and finally came upon a clearing, in the centre of which stood a typical Aguaruna hut.

My arrival naturally caused quite a flutter of excitement amongst the colony, and I was quick to notice how frightened some of them were of me—the women and children in particular keeping in the background. Later on I understood the reason for this. An Indian from another household came in whom I recognised as one of the men who had started out with me on the first occasion. His name was Tehi, and he gave an exhibition of

NEW SURROUNDINGS

how I had shaken Muñoz. Some laughed, but the majority took it very seriously and kept still further away from me, presumably thinking that I might break out again at any moment and shake one of them. A little wholesome respect is always a desirable spirit to instil in people of any kind, but when it amounted to fear, as it did in this case, it was bad, because it made it just so much more difficult to establish friendly relations with them.

It was strange to see human beings again and hear them talk, even if what they said was unintelligible, but it was stranger still to stretch out on a rack, and, with my feet over the smouldering embers of a fire, sleep snug and dry with some assurance of security. Quarters in the hut were inclined to be crowded; including babies there were forty-eight of us in all, and when this aggregation of humanity had accommodated itself on eight racks for the night there was not very much room left for me, and I soon gravitated to the earthen floor in preference. This was just as crowded, not with Indians, but with fleas—small fleas, and well-behaved ones at that, as they did not bite hard or leap about unless disturbed. One morning, before I realised that their numbers were unlimited, I spent half an hour valiantly trying to clear the place of their presence. For half an hour I worked steadily, drowning them in water as fast as I caught them; but after getting a total of seventy and finding that they were still springing about by dozens I admitted defeat and reconciled myself to the situation.

Under the influence of a little food my physical strength quickly revived, and innumerable schemes

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

for getting to Bellavista suggested themselves to my active brain. So far as I knew, my belongings were still lying out in the forest where Muñoz had abandoned me, and the most essential thing to do was to retrieve them with the least possible delay. Without beads or other articles of barter I could not hope to accomplish very much. My knowledge of the language was *nil*, but on the principle of actions speaking louder than words I gave an imitation of four Indians carrying packs, with all the necessary pantomime to indicate place and time, etc. It was a very successful effort, as two days later my possessions were brought into the house safe and sound, none the worse for their long sojourn in the forest. The bearers who rescued them were duly rewarded with buttons and beads, which they wove into artistic collars, the envy of all their friends.

It was really an extraordinary piece of good luck to be in possession of all my worldly goods once more, and the natural impulse was to unpack everything immediately to see that nothing had been lost or that mildew was not causing any damage; but the Indian is a quaint fellow—if you spread your possessions out in the sun to dry he takes it that you want to trade, and, what is more, he wants everything in sight. The secret of good trading is not to display your goods, but to keep them out of sight as much as possible except for a few articles at a time. It was not an auspicious moment for me to start negotiations of this kind, hence I had to leave my bundles wrapped up as they were and only remove surreptitiously such things as I needed. Encouraging as it was to be

LEARNING A STRANGE LANGUAGE

provided with the sinews of war, I saw that they alone would not set me free, and if I was to gain the confidence of my companions sufficiently for them to be willing to show me the way to the Chinchipe river, I would have to learn something of their language. Knowing only a few words was a serious handicap, and the sooner I extended my vocabulary the better.

This proved an interesting part of my daily life and deserves mentioning, as in the opening stages it was difficult to make my meaning clear. When a number of men collected I would pick up a *yuca*, for example, point to it and say in English, "This is a *yuca*; what do you call it in Aguaruna?" For a time there would be silence till some one more intelligent than the rest would venture the word "*Mama*." I wrote it down in my notebook, then took up another *yuca*, saying in an enquiring tone, "*Mama*?" One of the group would nod his head and say "*Irtah*"—from which I understood then that "*Mama*" was their name for *yuca* and that "*Irtah*" meant "yes"; thus I was able to collect a large assortment of nouns.

With adjectives my task was more difficult. I took a banana, which was called "*pampa*," and biting off a piece ate it with relish, smacked my lips, held up the fruit and said "*Pampa*," waiting for a reply. In a moment or two one of those present would say "*Zamock*," which I took to signify "good" or "ripe." Then I tried a bad banana, and showing great disgust at its decayed condition threw it away. "*Pampa*—" I said, pausing for the word. "*Catzuhan*," said a fellow near by, and, to make sure I understood, quickly

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I repeated "*Catzuhan pampa?*" But they all shook their heads and shouted in chorus, "*Atza, atza, pampa catzuhan!*" ("No, no, banana bad!"); in other words, adjectives followed their nouns.

When it came to using the words thus learnt I often found I had made mistakes; for instance, "*zamock*" was not an adjective signifying "good" or "ripe," but was a noun that meant "a ripe banana," as against "*pampa*," which was a green banana. The word "good," in the sense of good to eat, was "*puingy*," while good to look at—that is, pretty—was "*sumamy*." With the verbs I never made much headway, and came to the conclusion that they were always used in the same tense. With plurals it was usually a case of repeating the word several times; "*nua*," for instance, being "woman," and "*nua, nua*," "women."

Complications frequently arose through different men pronouncing the same word differently: "*pumata*," meaning "good-bye," was also pronounced "*pumate*"; and "*wirh*," meaning "salt," was also pronounced "*hui*" by some. To make a complete study of the language would take years of patient work, for although the Aguarunas are more or less a distinct tribe, each sub-tribe seems to have its own peculiarities of speech. Then when it is remembered that variations occur amongst members of the same household, the confusion is so great that it is difficult to say what is right and what is wrong.

The chief thing which characterised the life of these wild people was its everlasting monotony; one day was exactly like the next, seldom did anything happen which was of particular interest,

THE DAILY ROUND

and the one all-important occupation was the unending hunt for food. Bananas and yucas were cultivated near the habitation, and every morning at six the entire household sallied forth with baskets to collect what it needed to keep body and soul together. If the day were fine the majority of the men would go off by themselves to hunt in the forest, and leave the women and children to grub about the clearing as they pleased. The morning usually ended with a great deal of talking and very little real work being done. At noon every one staggered back with a load of something or another to eat, and the one real meal of the day was prepared. In the evening the second repast took place, consisting of what was left over from the first ; then, as darkness descended, every one retired to the racks to sleep.

The afternoon was looked upon as the correct time for conferences or visits. The women frequently occupied themselves with odd jobs, such as preparing "*nija-manchi*," or "*masata*"—an intoxicating beverage usually kept on hand for consumption at odd moments. The men talked, spun thread, or did anything else they pleased. If there was no rain they might put in a little extra time hunting or fishing, but usually they slipped off in twos and threes to neighbouring huts to discuss events with their friends. If the weather was bad it was not unusual for them to lie back on their racks and discourse music of a kind on a little flute made out of cane. The instrument had only four apertures at its lower end, and one would think that it was capable of producing several tunes at least, but so far as I could make out

SILENT HIGHWAYS OF THE JUNGLE

there was only one, which everybody played—a sort of “National Anthem.” As no two instruments were pitched in the same key, the discord, when several played together, was painful to a degree.

From the foregoing remarks it might be considered that the men were very lazy and allowed all the work to fall on the shoulders of their womenfolk. This, however, was far from the case. Each sex had its own distinctive duties, and the work the women performed was not arduous. The men cleared the forest for planting, brought in the logs for the fires—and fighting, of course, was another important duty which they alone concerned themselves with. The women were far from busy all the time ; they enjoyed long hours of idleness, or else pottered round with trifling matters of no consequence. One task to which men devoted a few moments of their leisure, and one that struck me as peculiarly inappropriate, was the spinning of thread from wild cotton and the weaving of primitive loin-cloths such as they wore.

Near to each rack stood a post with a bundle of wild cotton tied to it about five feet from the ground and with a small hand-spindle, for making thread, hung just below it. It amused me very much to see a hefty Indian enter the house, sit down on his wooden bench and make several yards of thread by way of diversion. The skill with which they manipulated it was really wonderful, but they soon tired of the work. The most energetic in this respect were the younger men, and they spun away for hours at a stretch. When a budding warrior had made himself a couple of loin-cloths, and possibly an extra one for some future wife, his

CLOTHING

energy flagged. That was a good life's work for any respectable Indian, and he could afford to rest from his toil.

Clothing, such as it was, had but one use, and that was to protect the wearer against flies and other insects that bite. Whenever we got caught out in the rain, all garments would be promptly removed and wrapped up carefully in leaves, so as not to get wet. The same way with dancing—it was a case of undressing rather than dressing up for the ball. Cotton was not the only material from which clothes were made; a much more simple article was the bark of a tree they called "*camuch*." The first time I saw a fellow belabouring a large piece of this bark with a cudgel I was greatly perplexed as to what his object could have been. After carefully hammering away for hours the stiff bark became flexible, and in time expanded into a nice soft strip of fibrous material.

Within a few days after my rescue by the Indians I was quite on my feet again and able to explore the surrounding country. The Marañon was not far away from the house, and some of the hills to the east had a familiar look about them. Taking all things into consideration, the Ipicus must have been about a mile further down-river. A short distance up-stream was a very bad cataract, which the Indians would not attempt to negotiate in their canoes, and it was for this reason that none had passed by my gravel-bar during the many days I was stranded there.

In spare moments I found great relief in reading my Spanish edition of "The Hound of the Baskervilles," which had been given me in Barranca,

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and which had been amongst the things saved from the whirlpool. This strange existence with a pack of Indians was so unnatural that I was glad of something tangible to remind me of the world such as I knew, and I read the book over and over again with avidity.

Now that my strength had returned and I was able to travel, I started overtures for continuing on my way towards Bellavista, but I was up against a blank wall, and wisely gave up all thought of trying to move until I was on more friendly terms. With this idea in view I made a point of joining in every excursion to neighbouring houses so as to widen my circle of acquaintances and thoroughly identify myself with Aguaruna society.

None of the huts in the district were visible from the river ; the clearings were set well back and the paths leading to them were obscure and broken. This was done intentionally, so that marauding Indians from other tribes would have greater difficulty in seeking them out. Many times, when out hunting, we would visit outlying habitations so securely hidden that we would be on top of them before I was aware of their existence. There were so many of them that it made me wonder how it was I had happened to miss stumbling across one in my walk through the woods ; but when I became familiar with the different families, instead of there being about twenty houses—as I had imagined—I found there were only six. The reason for my mistake was simple enough ; all the houses looked very much alike, and as we generally approached them by different routes it took many visits before I realised that it was



INSERTING A POISONED DART INTO A BLOW-GUN.

THE DEADLY BLOW-GUN

always the same house we kept on visiting. This group of habitations lay on the western side of the valley drained by the Ipicus. On the other side of the ridge (where I had walked) it was quite uninhabited country.

To live with people such as these was particularly interesting to me, because I did not come amongst them as one trying to teach, but more as a pupil trying to learn, and without doubt I learnt much. What afforded me the most enjoyment was to go off when the weather was good with one or two men and meander through the leafy shadows of the forest in search of game.

The two weapons used were the spear and the deadly blow-gun; of the two the blow-gun was possibly the more useful, since the spear was for killing larger animals, such as tapirs, which frequent the more open ground. The blow-guns that I saw were made with remarkable precision from two strips of *chonta* palm-wood, symmetrically grooved out, bound together and finished off with a variety of gum on the outside. Sometimes the mouth-piece was made of bone, otherwise the wood was left plain and fashioned to suit the tastes of the individual. The darts were merely slim splinters of wood about eight inches long, poisoned at the tip. Before inserting them in the mouthpiece one or two wads of wild cotton would be wound on the back end, so as to make an airtight fit in the tube. The gun was not held in what one would assume to be the most natural position, namely, with one hand close to the mouth and the other supporting the weapon as near its centre as possible, but both hands were kept close to the mouth-piece,

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and in this apparently awkward position the long tube was aimed. A good puff of air from the lungs of the operator and the dart would be driven out of the tube. The velocity being low, it described a very appreciable arc in its flight through space, which meant a high angle of fire and consequently great difficulty in aiming.

The unerring accuracy with which these men could shoot eighty to one hundred feet away was marvellous, and I saw them actually strike a monkey in mid-air as it leaped from one branch to another. It is not necessary for the dart to penetrate deep into the flesh of the animal ; so long as it scratches the skin and draws blood the poison does the rest. Within a minute or two the victim dies a painless death from paralysis of the heart. Now comes the most interesting fact : the animal so killed can be eaten without fear, as the poison, when taken internally, has no effect—only when it enters through the blood is the result fatal. One of the most difficult tasks when hunting in the forest is not to kill your quarry, but to find it after it has fallen into the dense underbrush round the roots of trees. Sometimes we spent as much as an hour searching for a bird that had been killed, and then again, look as we might, not a trace of it could be found.

My constant companion was a man called Tehi, and his attachment was chiefly the result of thinking me a great medicine-man, or the equivalent of it. He lived in another large oval hut three-quarters of a mile away, which belonged to his father and was crowded to overflowing with brown humanity. One day, while visiting his establishment, his

WOMEN

wife complained of evil spirits in her head. I at once thought of my medicine-box and wondered if aspirin might drive the evil spirits out. I went back and got some, giving her a single tablet with a little water and food. Within an hour she was smiling and laughing away as good as the rest of them. It proved a red-letter day for me; not only did it make Tehi my faithful friend, but it was the first step towards getting on really friendly terms with the tribe.

In my dealings with the women I had to use unusual caution. The men were extraordinarily jealous of their wives, and to have even smiled on one might have been enough to start trouble. I was not in a position to take any chances, and during my entire sojourn in the wilds not once did I speak to one, and even went so far as to avoid looking at them if possible. When we were squatted round on the floor for a pow-wow I would seek a position such that no woman would be in front of me. If a woman put food before me I never looked up and nodded "Thanks," but remained impassive as the Indians did. If I showed any sense of pleasure at all I would look towards the head of the household and wave my hand as if to say "Much obliged."

On the whole the women were not bad looking, and being rather scarce were in great demand—no matter what their age. The older ones had fine faces, with a kind, intelligent look about their eyes which more than compensated for any physical defects which follow in the train of old age. Their feet were the worst part of them—as a result of carrying heavy loads in their youth, they were

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inclined to be flat and turned inwards. Some of the young women were really quite pretty ; one in particular I recall, whose name was Panaguna : she was a most attractive little creature, small of stature, well formed, very light brown skin, and masses of long black hair hanging over her shoulders. When all was said and done I do not think looks counted for much in the matrimonial market ; good health and ability to work were probably more important ; yet, for all that, I do not see how any of the young braves could have remained insensible to the charm of Panaguna's laughing eyes.

Romance—although not unknown to the Indians—seldom plays an important part in their relations with each other. It would be extremely difficult to say what their ideas on marriage were ; but in the case of a young man just starting life, an imaginary incident, such as the following, might well take place :—

Atashu, a prosperous warrior, has just had the good fortune of having an old sister thrown back on his hands through the death of her husband, and is quick to take advantage of the situation to improve his own position. Nearby lives Papingy, an older man who has a son of marriageable age, to say nothing of a young unmarried daughter. One afternoon Atashu pays a visit to his friend, and after a good drink of *masata* remarks—in rather an offhand way—that he would like to take his host's daughter into his own establishment. "I am quite prepared," he adds, "to give you my old sister in return."

"What !" says the old man, "your sister in return for my daughter—not a bit of it !"

A MATRIMONIAL BARGAIN

But Atashu is quite prepared for this, and gazing in any direction other than that of the man he is talking to, continues unabashed: "Of course, I know she is a bit long in the tooth, but she is a marvel of domestic virtue—you don't know how big and strong she is. . . . Why, she cuts bananas wonderfully!—and you should just see her pull up yucas! I tell you she works better than anyone else in my household and would make an ideal wife for your son."

Papingy listens attentively to the discourse, and turns the matter over in his mind in silence; he probably makes a rough calculation—the woman is twenty-seven years old, that means twelve more years of useful life at the most, three or four children might be expected—no, it is not such a bad idea; a capable woman for his son would be an asset to the household, but he is not altogether convinced, and needs further persuading.

The pause had been rather a long one, and Atashu starts afresh, only on a new tack this time: "That daughter of yours," he says scornfully, "is very young, she may die; how do I know what she will develop into? It is like buying a pig in a poke. Heaven only knows what will happen to her five years from now. I am really taking a terrible risk in letting my sister go at all." Then, changing his tone, he continues: "My eldest wife will soon be dead; I need a little new blood in the family, some one young to replace her, so I am willing to take a chance."

"All right," answers Papingy dispassionately, and in a dreary voice adds—"bring your old sister round here and we will settle the bargain." So

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the matter is disposed of and the son takes unto himself a wife—the strong lady who digs yucas and cuts bananas better than anyone else in the brown society of the Aguaruna world—and Papingy's daughter is initiated into the mysteries of Atashu's establishment.

A man with many women to dispose of is looked upon as rich, but the one who has not any is worse than poor, for he usually ends by stealing one—a crime on a par with stealing bananas, for which the punishment is death—that is to say, if he is caught. War naturally follows in the footsteps of the thief, which extends to his family, and may embroil many innocent people. It is not war between distinct tribes which reduces the power of these aboriginal races so much as the incessant fighting amongst themselves. There seems to be no cohesion, and feuds between families living in different parts of the river are unending. As might be supposed, the chief—if not the only—cause of all trouble is—WOMAN.

Like other commodities women sometimes become scarce, and then they have to be hunted for amongst neighbouring tribes, resulting in tribal wars of a very sanguinary nature. Sometimes, as already stated, it is only one man who has no female relations to give in exchange for a wife and who is forced into stealing one; it is then that a family feud follows. The thief's method is to wait for an opportune moment when the river is in flood, and then, with his canoe in readiness, carrying a few banana shoots and yucas for planting, he slips off with the woman of his choice. Together they repair to some remote section of the forest,



SHRUNKEN HUMAN HEAD.



SHRUNKEN HUMAN HEAD BEFORE
LIPS HAVE BEEN SEWN UP.



SHRUNKEN HEAD, LIPS
SEWN UP.

SHRINKING HUMAN HEADS

where it is difficult to find them, and start life on their own account, only to be tracked down at some later date by the furious relations of the woman. The feud may be carried on for years and carried from one generation to another, or it may end in the thief being killed within a few months and the woman restored to her own home.

Under no consideration are women ever killed ; they are far too valuable and are carefully preserved, no matter what tribe they belong to. This results in a wide infusion of blood amongst the different tribes and accounts for the variety of facial characteristics seen on all sides. Seldom does a tribe keep its individuality ; mixtures are almost invariably found, and even the customs of one will spread to another. The further one probes into their habits the more confusing and perplexing it is to draw definite lines of demarcation between any of the dwellers of the forest who are within warring distance of each other.

The Aguarunas, in common with other tribes, have the habit of cutting off the heads of their enemies when dead, removing the skull and reducing what remains to the size of an orange, preserving the features and the hair so well that, if carefully done, there is nothing except size to distinguish the final dried-up diminutive from the original. There are various ways of doing this : after the skull has been removed, the embers from a fire, along with hot pebbles and certain herbs which have peculiar astringent qualities, are inserted and allowed to cool gradually. It is a slow process, which has to be frequently repeated, and requires considerable skill to preserve the features intact.

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To give them a nice finished look they are afterwards smoked black, polished, and frequently painted with a red dye.

With this gruesome token hanging round his neck the victor feels pretty certain that his enemy is dead, but before putting the finishing touches to the trophy there is one very important ceremony which, if neglected, might lead to trouble ; the conqueror places the head in front of him and curses it from one end of the alphabet to the other, but he does not want any back-chat from the spirit of the departed, so he takes the precaution of sewing the lips up tightly with long threads of fibre, which are left dangling down a foot or more and ornamented with feathers. The dead man is now out of harm's way, for there is his head, and with the lips permanently sealed his spirit has nothing more to say.

Whether it was thanks to a good appetite or not, I do not know, but the daily menu of yucas and bananas, if well prepared, never palled on me. Green bananas take about five hours to digest, whereas ripe ones only take two hours. For this reason the natives suppose them to be more nutritious when green ; be that as it may, my preference was certainly for the ripe ones. Unlike the fruit such as we are accustomed to see in England, the vegetable banana is not pleasing to eat raw, even when ripe, but boiled or baked any time after the skin has turned yellow it is extremely tasty and palatable.

With the Indians it was a case of feast or famine ; food was not plentiful, and when there was a surplus there was no way of preserving it for the future.

MONKEY'S MEAT FOR A CHANGE

They picked their bananas green, and they never got a chance of getting ripe, since hungry mouths were always open to be fed. As I preferred them ripe, I used to trade for bunches in return for various odds and ends, and then hang them up in the dark where they would ripen quickly. On no occasion was a bunch ever touched after it had become my property, which speaks a good deal for the ways of the savage, since food with him has the value of money in more civilised countries. Whenever I peeled a ripe banana for cooking the children would pick up the skin after I had thrown it away and eat it. From consuming so much raw food—especially food of this kind—their stomachs became very much distended, and remained so until they arrived at more discreet years and were more particular what they ate.

Occasionally I had a variety of sweet potato that was excellent, and twice after a successful day's fishing the whole colony stuffed itself with boiled fish. No food kept very long in the heat, and the fish, if not smoked, had to be eaten at once ; even when thoroughly dried they would only last four or five days, and then the ants would get after them. The process of smoking was simplicity itself ; a rack, called a *pungamo*, was made from green twigs over a fire and the fish laid out on it, while the wood beneath was allowed to smoke freely hour after hour.

Once in a while we indulged in the luxury of monkey's meat, or "*yacum*," as they called it. They were usually small, and when the fur had been singed off and the body placed over the fire to roast, it looked very much like a human baby.

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Under pressure of hunger looks did not worry me, but the toughness of the meat was a little trying to the jaws.

One day Cashipa, the head of the household in which I lived, brought down a small monkey with his blow-gun. It was exceptionally tough, and in the evening, as we sat round the fire, he tore off a hind leg from the carcase and handed it to me, after first making quite a meal on it himself. Nothing daunted I gnawed away on it for a minute or two, and as I could not make much headway either, handed it on to some one else to chew ; and so it went the rounds of the company. The last I saw of it, a small child was wrestling with the succulent morsel in a dark corner ; it was of the consistency of rubber, and the sharpest teeth made little impression on it.

There was yet another strange delicacy which defeated me completely ; it was by way of being a caterpillar, or, more correctly speaking, a white grub, two inches to three inches long, that burrowed into the trunk of a certain palm-tree. They were usually collected by the women, and, often as not, eaten raw. I could not face them this way at any price, but I did persuade myself to sample them cooked. A dozen or more were stuck on a green bamboo splinter and toasted in the embers of a fire until they were of a ruddy brown colour. When well cooked they were distributed amongst the family. Mashu-Wiha instructed me in the art of eating them ; the head was first pulled off, and then, squeezing with the fingers from the tail up, the meat issued forth like tooth-paste from a tube—a greenish yellow colour of none too inviting

FINGER BOWLS

an appearance. It had a distinct flavour to which I could never become accustomed, and for ever after, when toasted caterpillars were served, I passed them by.

The Aguarunas are very cleanly in their habits, and after a meal has been served one of the women likely as not brings round a large, hollow gourd full of water to wash with. It is a primitive conception of the modern finger-bowl; and particularly desirable at a feast where everything is eaten with the hands. On the first occasion I refused the proffered bowl, thinking it was *masata* to drink, but I watched Cashipa, who took a huge mouthful, which, for some reason, he did not swallow. The next instant he blew half of it out of his mouth over his hands, rubbing them well, and then blew the remainder on them to rinse them off thoroughly. The final touch was to dry his hands on his long black hair, which he afterwards combed carefully for several minutes. This was the regular procedure which followed any meal.

One afternoon, while I was reading as usual in the hut, a man whom I had not seen before slipped in through the narrow doorway, and, without salutation to anyone, lay down on a rack, cocked one leg over the other, and with an unceremonious grunt of satisfaction went to sleep. He was evidently thoroughly disgusted with life, which was not surprising, seeing that outside the rain was coming down heavily and the household had reconciled itself to remaining under cover for the rest of the day, if not for several days. It was one of those unending downpours such as I was only too familiar with ; the drops fell vertically

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from a leaden sky, bringing down all the gloom and melancholy of eternity with them. In an hour or two the Ipicus would be swollen into a brawling mass of chocolate-coloured liquid; the main river also would be racing along faster than ever, thick as pea-soup, and covered with debris of all kinds. How well I knew what it would look like—had I not watched it for hours at a time, crouched under my shelter near its banks, not more than a week or two ago? The sound of the rain brought back those memories, and being unpleasant ones I tried to drive them away by reading industriously of Sherlock Holmes and how he unravelled the mystery which surrounded “The Hound of the Baskervilles.”

The entrance of Swengy—for such was the visitor’s name—caused no comment; he must have been a frequent visitor, for no one paid any attention to his arrival; maybe they were too sleepy—at any rate, it was not etiquette to ask questions. Within the dwelling the atmosphere was rather thick; a strong smell of smoked fish still hung about, which accounted for the lethargy of the men—they had eaten well and were now resting from their labours.

Three women sat near the centre of the hut around a large earthen pot, preparing *masata*—mechanically chewing the boiled yuca and spitting the material, after it had been well masticated, into another vessel. Panaguna was one of them, and when Swengy came in she looked up for a second, her brown eyes sparkling as usual. She made some remark to the other women, but they paid no heed to her and continued their task as

THE ARRIVAL OF SWENGY

if nothing had happened. The only other piece of animated intelligence in the hut was Hapa-Nini, one of the younger men, who, despite his heavy meal of fish, was so busy spinning cotton that he paid no attention to anything else. Presently even he hung up his spindle, stretched, and sat down on the foot of his rack, as if ready to take a well-earned rest.

His movements brought Swengy back to life ; he sat up promptly and produced a wallet, exclaiming something in Aguaruna at the same time which I could not understand. Its effect on the household was electric ; every one got up and crowded round the visitor, gesticulating and talking all at once. I remained on the outside of the group wondering what the subject was that was being discussed in such a lively way. Curiosity got the better of me, and at the first opportunity I squeezed in amongst them to see what all the talk was about.

Hapa-Nini was holding in his hand a most gruesome relic—an Indian's head, dried up and shrivelled to the size of an orange. From all I could gather the head was that of a relative who had been killed in some fighting with another tribe. Swengy, with others, had just returned from a successful counter-raid, and had rescued the head of the deceased from adorning the girdle of his slayer. This was the story, so far as I could piece it together from my fragmentary knowledge of the language. Tehi came in later and told me that another expedition on a large scale was contemplated to avenge the death of the slain, but before any action could be taken the matter would have to be slept over. To me this seemed an

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excessively wise precaution, as I had no wish to have my friends plunged into warfare if, through deliberation, it might be avoided.

The process of sleeping over the matter was revealed to me the next day, and was hardly what I expected. At an early hour, while it was still raining, the young men went out in the forest and collected the stalks of a creeping vine, or *bejuco*, which was called "*ayahuasca*"; these were brought back to the hut, scraped thoroughly and broken into short lengths, which were put to boil in a large pot of water. All day long the concoction simmered over the fire, and at regular intervals the *tundai*, or signal drum, would be beaten violently. At about 5.30 the men of the household collected and stood in front of a light shelf made of cane specially prepared for the occasion, about four feet high. Cashipa, Mashu-Wiha, Hapa-Nini, and Swengy were lined up with the rest of them, and, with spears in hand, the ceremony which was to determine the fate of the tribe began.

The coffee-coloured liquid from the pot was poured out into a number of little bowls and set before each warrior; then, as the drumming on the *tundai* ceased, they broke into weird barbaric chant that still rings in my ears; it stopped abruptly within a few minutes and the men let forth blood-curdling yells, shaking their spears over their heads at the same time; then, planting their weapons in the ground, each seized his respective bowl and drank the contents at one gulp. The next procedure was to put their fingers in their mouths and vomit it all up again. Bowls were refilled, and

THE CEREMONY OF *AYAHUASCA*

the wild chant started afresh ; this was repeated over and over again, till those that had taken part in the ceremony, thoroughly exhausted and stupefied, staggered to their racks and went to sleep.

There were some strange noises to be heard that night, as the men under the influence of the *ayahuasca* raved in their sleep, supposedly dreaming of their enemies. If there had been many such performances I should have gone insane ; had I had a companion it would not have been so bad, but alone amongst such monstrous surroundings I began to doubt my very existence.

It was alarming to think what the results might be of sleeping over such an important matter as going to war, and it looked to me as if the issue could only take one turn. But I was mistaken ; the unanimous verdict the following morning was that the time was not auspicious to embark on such an enterprise, and they would have to wait until the spirit of *Ayahuasca* looked upon the venture with more favourable eyes. I was thankful that for a time, at any rate, war had been so narrowly averted, and I gave the spirits of *Ayahuasca* full credit for their wise counsels.

CHAPTER XIV

BEFORE I had lived very long with the Aguaruna Indians I had learnt many secrets of their fireside and was looked upon as a tribal incumbent of a very desirable kind. The fear in which they originally held me had completely given way to a feeling of profound respect, and in the case of the family with whom I lived to one of pride that such a wonderful man should sojourn under their roof.

Cashipa's own feelings were tempered with a sense of ownership, since it was he who had found me on the river bank, and it was he who had launched me into Aguaruna society. The logical inference was that it was he who was deriving all the benefit of my power to drive out evil spirits. Whether he actually hired out my services or not I am not sure, but I had my suspicions that he did ; at any rate, his household was reaping the advantage of the trade I was doing with them, which in itself was elevating them to the enviable position of being that of the most prosperous in the community. I moved in and out of the house as I pleased—a welcome guest on the most friendly terms possible. The children no longer ran away from me and hid behind their mothers, but came forward as if asking to see more new tricks such

A VIRTUAL PRISONER

as I frequently indulged in for their special edification.

The moment I felt that the confidence of the entire household was mine I once more broached the subject of my journey, spreading out a few of my trinkets and proclaiming my desire to get three Indians to go with me to the Chinchipe river. In vain I waited for offers—not a soul came forward ; I increased the price to almost everything I possessed, but still they remained apathetic to my appeal. A day or two later I tried again, with no better results, so that I sat down, after herculean efforts, completely baffled and mystified by their reluctance to assist me.

There was no question about our being on friendly terms—every one smiled and laughed at my efforts to induce them to join in a trip, yet it was painfully evident that no help was forthcoming, and I began to figure out how long I could go on living in luxury, paying for all my food, and generally acting as a great man. Of beads, buttons, and needles I had none left ; other articles were also on the wane ; medicines, too, would be exhausted shortly, and the moment that day came my power to influence evil spirits would cease, and then friendliness might swing round to savagery.

I pondered over the situation for some time in every detail, until it began to dawn on me that the refusal—for the moment, at any rate—was only prompted by over-friendly motives ; in my efforts to win their regard I had surpassed my expectations, and now they did not want to lose me. They saw no reason for my going ; we were all happy together—why should I wish to go ? what other place was there to go to ? No, their unwillingness

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to accompany me was not hostility, but tantamount to saying, "Please stay with us a little longer."

This was all very well, but I saw how impossible it was to remain; furthermore, my anxiety to get away was becoming an obsession, and the unreality of the life I led was getting on my nerves. Imagine sleeping every night on the floor of a small hut housing forty-eight naked savages, eating with my fingers, like an animal, washing with sand, talking in grunts, or else waving my arms about like a lunatic to help convey my ideas to the childlike intellects around me! The strain of the past few months was also beginning to tell. Could I go on standing such abnormal surroundings and yet keep my sanity?

In efforts to distract my thoughts into different channels I read and re-read "The Hound of the Baskervilles" till I almost knew it by heart; I also spent a good deal of time making friends with the numerous pets which the Indians kept in the house. A gaudy macaw, two tucans, a night monkey, and a baby peccary were amongst them, and what appealed to me was that, like myself, they were free to come and go as they pleased; they were not tied up, and the birds had not even their wings clipped. The macaw was a wise old fellow, and would sometimes absent himself all day long in the forest, but he would come home to roost in the evening without fail. Like a flash of flame tearing through space he would fly from the edge of the clearing into the hut and take up his usual position for the night like any other member of the household. The tucans were extraordinarily comic and agile;



A TUCAN



A NIGHT MONKEY

PETS

I do not think I have ever seen such amusing birds. The night monkey also was very entertaining ; he lived up in the rafters and never got up till four in the afternoon, but he was a friendly little chap, scampered all over the place, and had not the slightest fear of anyone. The baby peccary's peculiarity was that he behaved exactly like a dog, slept near his master's rack, and whenever he went out the peccary would follow at heel, stopping when he stopped, and going on again when his master did.

No matter how much time I would spend on such diversions, my thoughts invariably came back sooner or later as to how I was to get away to civilisation. How was I to convey to these savage people my overwhelming desire to move on to other parts ? It was a question that puzzled me, as I failed to see any line of argument they would be capable of understanding. To say that I had pressing business reasons, or wanted to go to England, would have been so much Greek ; their brain was not sufficiently developed to understand anything except the most rudimentary ideas.

Some gauge of their mentality can be gathered when I say that a photograph meant nothing to them ; they were no more capable of understanding what it represented than an animal. I had tried once showing them a photograph of some Jibaro Indians, which were in general appearance identical to the Aguarunas, but they turned the picture upside down, on its side, looked at the back of it, and, with an inscrutable expression of blankness, handed it back as if to say, " That may be very interesting, but what is it all about ? " It

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sounds incredible that, without movement or perspective, a picture conveyed nothing to them, and had it been one of themselves they would not have recognised it as such, any more than a dog would if you had shown him a photo of himself. It was with people on such a low plane of mental development as this that I had to deal, and how to impart to them the complicated thought that it was important for me to go to the Chinchipe river at once was a task that taxed my own mental resources to the limit.

There was still another difficulty staring me in the face—stocks were getting low, and I was reduced to manufacturing articles from all sorts of odds and ends which remained behind in order to buy food. Had I had any more beads I don't suppose they would have commanded much of a market, seeing that every one was well provided with this commodity. I was therefore put to it to devise novelties that would appeal to my friends. Dame Fashion seemed to sway the minds of men and women much the same way in the wilds of the Amazon as she does in Paris or anywhere else. The Indians valued their ornaments because of their gaudy colour, the jingle they made, or because they were unique. It was only on the latter score of novelty that I could hope to interest them; hence it was not surprising that my wrecked camera brought me in a lot of business.

It was a reflecting one, so, of course, the mirror was of great value. Springs, metal binding strips, brass screws, and all kinds of fittings provided me with a regular supply of food for a considerable time. I traded the long spiral spring alone for

THE VALUE OF THINGS

four bunches of bananas. It needed a little scheming and planning, but the parts mentioned lent themselves to ear-rings and other ornaments which were quite new to these simple people.

Once I indiscreetly threw out the red paper backing of a Kodak film ; it was pounced upon by a child and ended on the head of Cashipa, who strutted round with it as proud as a peacock, until a gust of wind carried it away. That gave me another idea to work on ; I had several hundreds of feet of motion picture film, and by looping twelve or fifteen feet of it together into a large ring and weaving fibre through the perforations, it made a splendid crown ; with a feather stuck vertically at the back it proved irresistible. Yet another successful ornament was made out of the round metal ends taken off the spools upon which Kodak films are wound ; these flat discs I joined together like so many coins into a necklace.

While the aforementioned articles brought me in a bountiful supply of food so long as they lasted, it was not through trading that I gained the goodwill of the community, but through medicines. It was my ability to allay their pains that established my reputation throughout the length and breadth of the forest as a great personage. I have already mentioned how my friendship with Tehi started through curing his wife of a headache. This was not the only time I applied medicines with beneficial results ; it was a common complaint to have evil spirits in the head, and before I left most of the colony, and many strangers, had come under my treatment with equal success.

I well remember my consternation when the

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stock of aspirin began to run low, and I was confronted with the very embarrassing position of not being able to effect any more cures. I had laboured under the delusion that there was still the contents of another bottle to draw upon, but at the last moment discovered that it was quinine and not aspirin, as I thought. Something had to be done, so I resorted to faith-curing for a change, and substituted the quinine tablets in place of the aspirin; they had deceived me, so it was not likely that the Indians would be much the wiser, especially since they were white and bitter. Under the circumstances, it was far better policy to administer quinine rather than nothing at all. To my surprise the evil spirits had just as strong an objection to the latter as they had to the former, and when quinine also began to get scarce I had no hesitation in substituting something else again. This time it was bicarbonate of soda tablets which came to the rescue, and it must be admitted that their effect on the patient was every bit as satisfactory.

Permanganate of potash was yet another article which brought me fame. To amuse the children I concealed a small crystal of it under my finger nail and then immersed it in clear water, bidding them watch carefully. The older people were very much more startled than the youngsters to see the beautiful magenta colour diffuse itself throughout the liquid, and thought it was some new form of magic I was practising.

For disinfecting cuts and sores, of which the Indians had plenty, and which, through lack of care, sometimes got into a terrible state, permanganate of potash was invaluable. One man was

NO WORK, NO FOOD

suffering from a bad abrasion on the leg caused by a fall ; it never seemed to heal, so I washed it well with a strong solution. The result was so satisfactory that Indians whom I had never seen before came from remote parts of the woods to have their sores cleansed. On each occasion quite a formal reception was held, in which all the household joined—Cashipa, of course, officiating as master of the ceremonies.

So long as it was possible to work miracles, or trade for food in the way I was doing, I could have gone on living with these Indians indefinitely ; but the minute I should fail to keep my end up I would have been obliged to dig yucas and hunt with the rest of them, or else starve to death just the way any of the old people did who could no longer do their share of work. Altruism has no place in the lives of those who dwell in the jungle. When men or women cease to be self-supporting, or become incapable of carrying on their respective duties, death follows as a natural consequence. Not only do the strong fail to support the weak, but in many cases they go so far as to hasten their departure into the next world with the aid of a little poison such as they use on their blow-gun darts, or other concoctions which they are expert at preparing.

Old people are rarely seen ; I saw but two during a whole year's travelling—a man and a woman. The former was vigorous despite his years and able to do a day's work, but the woman (she belonged to Tehi's household) was a pitiable sight—a crinkled heap of worn-out old age. Unable to work, she only fed when there was a surplus of

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food, and that was very seldom ; how she ever kept going at all on the scraps the other women sometimes gave her on the sly I cannot imagine ; but she hung on tenaciously to her miserable existence until one day she was seen no more. To my enquiries Tehi pointed significantly in the direction of the river—death by drowning was better than starvation. The Cashibo Indians are reputed to take greater care of their old relatives—systematically killing them and banqueting off the corpse, so as to properly assimilate the virtues of the deceased.

While it is not unusual amongst many of these tribes to assist their relations out of the world as soon as their span of usefulness is completed, the young ones receive precious little encouragement when coming into it. From earliest infancy, when the newly-born child is treated to a cold plunge in the river, it has to lead a Spartan-like existence in every sense of the word. Weaklings soon succumb and only the very robust survive. The slightest symptoms of bad health are attributed to evil spirits and receive drastic treatment ; such a fate befell a small boy in Cashipa's household just before I arrived. He had contracted some curious disease of the eyes which was regarded in the light of an evil omen of such a serious character that he was strung up to a tree in a remote corner of the forest and left to die.

Another curious practice of the Murato Indians is that of drowning a newly-born infant if its sex is not in accordance with the parents' wishes. Fortunately the parents do not always express their desires, but should they do so and disappointment follows, the offending babe is hurled

THE SPIRITS OF THE FOREST

into the river without further ceremony. The river is the natural burying ground, but if an Aguaruna is killed in action they mummify the body, wrap it up in bark and place it in the centre of the hut on a stand, as an object of veneration. With some tribes it is customary to abandon a hut altogether when a death occurs in the family, burying the body in the centre. A new hut is then built, and the old one left for the spirit of the deceased to dwell in.

One is prone to laugh at the savage's idea of evil spirits, yet a close observer cannot fail to observe the existence of something intangible at the very root of life in the woods which may well account for their superstition. If there is any foundation at all for believing houses in civilised countries to be haunted by the spirits of those who have come to violent ends within their walls, there is still greater reason for believing the same of the great Amazon forests. It is within the realm of scientific possibility that the circumstances surrounding the tragic deaths of so many human beings in these gloomy solitudes are enacted night after night, till the mental forces which have set them in motion have subsided in the mystical sea of eternity. On no other grounds is it possible to account for the many strange sounds and presentiments with which those who live long in these parts become familiar. Even the least sensitive are subconsciously aware of something abnormal in the atmosphere of the woods.

On my last excursion into the interior both myself and several companions indulged one night in the most hideous nightmares. We naturally

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attributed it to having eaten too much, but when we came to compare notes it developed that the substance of each dream had been more or less the same. This fact alone was more than curious, but we learnt later that an expedition had actually come to grief at that very spot some years previously. According to an Indian, the leader—who was an Englishman—carried quite a good deal of gold in his baggage, and his men, intent on robbery, shot him while coming down the river on a raft. In his last moments he seized the gold and flung it into deep water, so that his murderers should not benefit by their deed. Our dream version of the incident differed in detail with each one of us, but in the main facts the tragedy was the same.

A similar influence is also known to adhere at times to trophies, such as shrunken human heads, which travellers have brought back with them. Misfortune will dog their footsteps till they have passed on their gruesome relic to some one else. There have also been cases reported of these same heads causing the owner to dream terrible dreams identical in every detail for several nights running.

As the days slipped by I became more and more anxious concerning the fate which awaited me if I remained a virtual prisoner in the hands of the Aguarunas. Think as I might, it seemed well-nigh impossible to hit upon any logical reason for wanting to go away which could be easily expressed in the language of my captors, and which, at the same time, would imply the necessity for haste. As in most difficult problems, the solution was simple enough when once the answer had been found.

I had noticed that the men did not relish being

THE GREAT IDEA

separated from their families for long at a time. Even on short expeditions a few women and children always came along, as if one was indispensable for the other's happiness. Yet, again, those who had been obliged to remain under the family shelter showed unmistakable signs of pleasure when the absent ones came back. This set me thinking; if an Indian wanted to hurry back to his family after an absence of a day or two, surely my desire to return to my home, after weeks of wandering in strange parts, should make a very strong appeal to their natures. If so, the plan was simple in the extreme. I would tell my friends that I wanted to go back to my own fireside. It was a primitive instinct that the wildest savage should understand, and, furthermore, he would appreciate my desire for haste.

That very evening I put my ideas into practical shape, and when the household was assembled to partake of the remnants left over from the day's food supply I said, "*Yurmi Chinchipe nua nua chano chano atzuhan*"—at the same time I pointed westward to the evening sun as it sank majestically behind the hills, slapped my chest and looked very disconsolate, which was my way of saying that on the Chinchipe river, in the direction of the setting sun, I had wives and children waiting for me, and they were very sad—like myself—because I did not come home. It was a mental picture of my domestic affairs which was well within their comprehension, and in two days' time pink shadows of hope once more loomed up on my otherwise grey horizon.

It was my staunch friend, Tehi, who made the first overtures to accompany me to the Chinchipe, where the mythical wives and children were pining

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for my return. In the early morning I was standing outside the hut, before the usual exodus of the inmates to the family banana-patch, when Tehi came out of the forest holding a huge leaf over his head to keep off the drizzle that was falling. It was an unusual hour for a visit, so I waited with special interest to ascertain the cause of it.

He took a seat near me inside the house, and after a few words of greeting to those round about, turned towards me and quietly unfolded a plan. It was a long process translating his words and gestures, but piece by piece I gathered the details. His father was talking of a hunting trip to the Chinchipe river—far away to where the great forest came to an end and where the rocks were so sharp that they cut the feet unmercifully. I might come along with them. He (Tehi) would carry one of my big bundles, no doubt his father would shoulder a second, and then, if we could find a third man, all would be well. There was still a whole day to prepare food, since we would not start to-morrow, but the day after, when there would be a little less water in the river.

So spake Tehi—and to say that I was thrilled with excitement would poorly express my feelings; yet, outwardly, I remained impassive, and grunted in Aguaruna style, as if it were immaterial to me what I did. By way of encouraging my friend not to relax his interest in the trip I remarked, "*Cashi Wakeha duhauho ticachi aishman,*" which, being translated, meant that I would buy plenty of food for all the men to-morrow.

With a promise to return in the evening Tehi left me, and without further delay I undid my

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

bundles, looked over my possessions systematically, and spread everything out in the sun ready for the family when they came back from their morning's work.

This was to be my one great chance of getting away ; I would stake everything I had on it, and would not conceal anything from view—I even displayed a suit of pyjamas, some old flannel trousers, and a soft shirt or two. My wish to trade for the services of one man to go on the expedition with me bore no fruit whatsoever—not a single member of Cashipa's household came up to the scratch ; whether it was because they did not know the route, or just didn't want to come, was not easy to say ; they fingered the tattered clothing, saying, "*Aicu Sumamy*," but there it ended ; they never pointed to themselves, signifying they wanted to possess the articles in question ; still it was something that they showed interest in the goods at all, and they might still decide to join me at the last moment.

Tehi, true to his word, was back again in the afternoon with his father, Iwanch, and together they inspected my wares ; the suit of pyjamas seemed to strike their fancy more than anything else, but seeing that I could not give it to both of them I steered their attention towards other things ; no matter what I showed them they always came back to the pyjamas as being the one article they coveted most—so, with the wisdom of Solomon, I presented the top half to father and the lower half to son, an action which met with unstinted approval from both. I was not inclined to be parsimonious in my dealings, but gave other things as well, such as a few remaining boxes of matches,

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an old belt, a cloth cap, and various oddments which were of no further use to me. Thoroughly pleased with their new possessions, and with further promises of bringing in another man to make up the party, they went back to their house, leaving me to reflect at leisure on the happenings of the day.

My last twenty-four hours of captivity were about as trying as any I ever experienced during my entire sojourn with the Aguarunas. All the morning I waited for signs of the third man as promised, but he never turned up. In desperation I went off to Tehi's house in the afternoon to make enquiries, only to find that worthy sound asleep on his rack, and not worrying himself in the least about the matter. After much persuasion I got him to go with me to a couple of other houses, but we drew a blank at each—no one wanted to undertake such a long trip. It looked so hopeless that I told Tehi that if we failed to get the necessary third man I proposed leaving some of my cargo behind, but go I would with Iwanch and himself as arranged. I was not going to let a chance like this slip through my fingers under any consideration.

The joy caused at the prospects of departure was greatly diminished by the thought of losing my "movie" camera, for that was the only thing left for me to discard ; it had been many thousands of miles with me, had worked like clockwork, and never failed me once. It had also been down to the bottom of the Amazon in the whirlpool and fished up again by the *bogas* ; I was therefore more than reluctant to throw it away when so near my goal ; still, if the worst came to the worst, it would have to be done.

LAST NIGHT OF CAPTIVITY

I had quite reconciled myself to its loss when Tehi's familiar form appeared out of the evening shadows, closely followed by another Indian whom I had never seen before. He was a large fellow, heavily built, and rejoiced in the name of Wahu-Yata. He examined one of my bundles, lifted it up carefully as if to gauge its weight, and then expressed himself as willing to go with me. I soon had his promise in return for a ragged khaki shirt, along with other sundries of little importance, and so the bargain was finally sealed.

I had already provided for a good supply of yucas, bananas, and *masata* for the journey, but now that everything had been settled I gave away my few remaining belongings wholesale, so elated was I at the thought of continuing my journey. Should Tehi and his companions fail me at the last moment I should be in a nice fix, as only a small amount of money remained. Taking everything into consideration I was pretty lucky to have that, as when I got to Bellavista there was a two weeks' journey still ahead of me for which money alone could pay.

That night I went to sleep with a lighter heart than I had done for many weeks, and allowed myself to indulge in all kinds of speculations as to what civilised people would look like and what I should do to bring Muñoz to book when I got back to the coast. In a week's time I would have extricated myself from the strangle-hold of the forest, and would be able to see heaven and earth in true proportions, instead of being smothered under a canopy of vile vegetable growth.

In the morning an unusually heavy mist enveloped

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the landscape, and hung like a wet blanket over the tree-tops to damp my ardour. If my friends had postponed our departure I would not have been surprised. I made no comments on the prospects, but sat in stolid silence awaiting Tehi's arrival. I gazed anxiously across the clearing for over half an hour before I saw him and his companions steal out of the forest, pick their way carefully amongst the dripping bushes, and come over to the hut. He greeted me with a grunt and the salutation of "*Minache*," which intimated that he was in a good frame of mind and not disposed to cancel our arrangements. The food was soon in readiness, the three packs adjusted to the satisfaction of the bearers, and off we set.

Our departure caused no excitement, neither was it attended by any demonstration whatsoever; an extra amount of chatter took place which increased in volume up to the last moment, when every one stopped simultaneously, and with the usual "*Pumata*," spoken in subdued tones, the party moved off into the forest. Tehi, Iwanch, Wahu-Yata, two women and a small boy made up our numbers; I fell into line with the rest of them, and in true Indian file we settled down to the long march ahead of us. My last impression of the oval hut where I had spent so many anxious days was indeed a cheerless one: glancing back, I saw the entire family trooping off as usual into the grey mist on the endless hunt for food.

It was a good omen that, in spite of the rain, every one seemed happy; no doubt the few remaining trinkets which I had disposed of with such a lavish hand on the last day had helped to make

ONCE MORE ON THE MARCH

my companions feel contented ; if so, so much the better, because—although on the road to liberty—I was not feeling particularly elated. Conditions were very similar to when I had first set out with Muñoz. The rain came down heavily, we rested an hour under palm leaves, we encountered the Ipicus, and waded up it at the same place, and finally camped at the identical spot, under the remnants of our old shelter, where affairs had reached a climax.

As I sat down and waited for night to fall I was nearer losing my mental balance than ever before, and that is saying a good deal, since the last few weeks had been enough to upset the equilibrium of the sanest person. Here—at the same spot and under almost identical conditions as obtained when Muñoz was with me—I felt as if I was once more going to experience the same fearful nightmares of the past. Darkness soon came to my relief and I went to sleep. The flood-gates of heaven were opened during the night, but the morning broke clear, and I awoke to the realities of life with every confidence in my ability to grapple with the situation.

In an hour or so we were on the banks of a good-sized river, which Tehi called Wahupaza, and the next morning were wading up its turbid waters against a powerful current. We continued like this for the rest of the day. Several deep pools on bends forced us out into the forest for a short distance, but within a minute or two we would be back in the water. Wahu-Yata was nearly carried away by the current in several places, and I had to give a hand to save the gear from a watery

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grave ; the little Indian women also, on account of their small stature, were constantly in trouble, and periodically I carried their loads while they swam the deep passages. It was altogether a novel experience, but not one I would care to repeat often.

I had troubles of my own with a vengeance, and my bare feet were horribly cut about on the sharp rocks ; furthermore, I succeeded in jamming a long hard-wood splinter between two toes, which proved excruciatingly painful. Of minor pests the sand-flies were on hand by the million, and settled on every piece of exposed flesh—not a difficult task, seeing that no one had any clothes on except myself, and that was only a hat. About three we branched up a tributary coming in on our right, but there was such a seething mass of foam coming down its rocky course that we were obliged to camp and wait till the following day, when the rush of water would have subsided somewhat.

Another half-day was spent in the water before once more taking to the leaf-strewn ground of the forest. I don't believe I could have continued another twenty minutes over the bed of that rocky creek ; my feet were badly lacerated, and it was agony to even hobble along slowly behind the Indians. The climb out of the valley was very steep, but we stopped frequently to get breath, or else examine the tracks of some animal ; two months ago such things were invisible to my eyes, but weeks of living with the Aguarunas had opened them to many mysteries of the wilds. So far our hunting had not been very successful, and it



ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD.

VEXATIOUS DELAYS

was not till the fourth day that we brought down a small monkey. That night, as the smoke of our fire curled up through the trees and the savoury smell of roasted meat floated in the air, I took careful stock of our provisions ; there was barely a day's rations left. The unexpected flood in the river had gravely affected our plans, for we had covered in four days what should only have taken us two ; this meant that there was still the possibility of having to go back and postponing my dash for freedom indefinitely.

With such a contingency before me it is not surprising that I wanted to urge the men forward at every opportunity, but it would have served no good purpose to have done so ; we could not travel without food, and food was invariably the cause of our halts. We would be walking along in silence when some bird's cry would ring out over the forest ; every one would stop immediately, put down their packs, and wait while Tehi, with stealthy step, slipped off into the brush, returning ten minutes later empty-handed. Sometimes it was Iwanch who would go off on the chase, or else he would stop still and squawk away for several minutes imitating the bird whose cry he had heard. So well did he do it that the unsuspecting victim would come flapping down into the branches overhead on the look-out for his companion. A well-directed poisoned dart, silent and swift, was all he got for his pains. On another occasion a *chonta* palm-tree was the centre of attraction, and an hour spent in hacking out the tender green heart was nothing. One particularly long drawn-out halt caused me a great deal of uneasiness. For

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no apparent reason the entire party disappeared for at least forty minutes, leaving me to stand still until they came back. In the interval they had collected over seventy caterpillars, which they ate raw before proceeding further.

There were times when I myself would have enjoyed stopping to examine something of interest, but our progress was so very slow as it was that I had no inclination to put a further check on it. The most serious delay was caused by my old enemy the Marañon, which had once more to be reckoned with before reaching our destination. This time it was merely a case of crossing over to the opposite bank on an improvised raft, but a precarious business for all that, as the water floundered madly along between piles of coarse granite boulders and slabs of slate. It was a full ten hours' work searching the forest for *balsa* trees, stripping the bark, and lashing the trunks together into a more or less substantial platform ; but when completed two or three minutes' vigorous work saw us safely across.

After a quiet night on the banks of a torrent called Pomara, we struck out on a more westerly course up an interminable slope to a very high ridge. In a hollow near the summit was a clearing freshly planted with yucas, bananas, and sugarcane, which showed unmistakable signs of more intelligent cultivation than any Indian ever bestows on such things. Any doubt that there might have been in my mind was soon dispelled by the sight of a well-defined trail leading out of the forest on the opposite side which was certainly not the work of a savage.

A TRANSFORMATION SCENE

Along this open pathway we moved with ease and freedom that contrasted strangely with what we had been accustomed to in the past. For an hour we fairly ran along the smooth surface up to the crest of the divide, which was covered with coarse grass and bracken. What a wondrous change it was—not a single tree, just open sky and pure fresh air. I could hardly contain myself with joy. Upward our course lay for a short distance, and, behold, the scales of blindness dropped from my eyes completely, and I could see once more. Sky, land, and rivers now lay before me like an open book; no longer was I a worm crawling blindly through the brush amongst the roots of the underworld, but a condor on a crag surveying the giant horizon of frowning mountain tops that stretched away north and south into the illimitable blue of remoteness.

In front the great peaks of the Andean divide jutted up towards the heavens, streaked and scarred like rugged walls of some impregnable city of the gods. The evening sun peered over the jagged battlements—a ball of crimson fury lending colour to the scene and casting long shadows across ravines and gulleys, which in turn threw the whole landscape into a bold relief of unparalleled magnificence. Down below were the valleys of the Chinchipe, Marañon, and Chamaya rivers, carved and scraped out of the earth's crust, colossal gutters wherein those waters collected which fed the rapacious maw of the mighty Amazon—that living mass of swirling liquid green against which I had been struggling ever since leaving Iquitos.

To one who had just crept out of the forest

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world, where groping amongst the trees and living with monstrous terrors of the unseen represented the sum total of existence, this sudden return to light came with overwhelming significance. I was literally dumfounded and amazed to realise that the mind of Man could dwell on or perceive anything other than leaves and branches off which water incessantly dripped. As I gazed at the stupendous spectacle which unfolded before me, thoughts of proportionate magnitude welled up within me; big ideas once more expanded my shrivelled mind; I forgot my petty quarrels with the river and my trivial disagreements with the forest; my perspective returned and I saw things in their true proportion.

Our course lay down-hill for a short distance through a forest of wild orange-trees and then out again on to a shoulder of the mountain where my friends put down their packs with an air of finality. "*Aishman*," said Tehi, pointing down the slope and motioning me to go on ahead to reconnoitre. I did so, and not far off found a hut occupied by a mountain *cholo* who spoke quite good Spanish. He was a little startled to see a bearded ruffian like myself emerge from the back of beyond, but he gave me a cordial welcome, and together we returned to the little group of Aguarunas waiting on the hillside.

They wanted to start back without delay, so I arranged to give them all the yucas and bananas they could possibly carry. It seemed quite inadequate for the services which they had rendered, yet I was at a loss to know what else to do for them, till I happened to notice Tehi admiring some baby

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

pigs that were running about. At once I arranged with the *cholo* to buy a couple for them as a souvenir of the trip ; they were extraordinarily pleased with the gift, and feeling thoroughly happy raised their hands in final salutation of farewell. "*Pumata! Pumata!*" they shouted, and amidst much squealing from the piglets—which Iwanch had tucked away under his sinewy arms—my friends set their faces homewards along the route we had come by.

This, then, was the parting of the ways ; my future safety was assured, and with an indescribable feeling of thankfulness and pity I watched the retreating forms of my friends move slowly up the slope. When flitting about amongst the exuberant vegetation of the Amazon they cut an important figure, but here, on the bare mountain side, they appeared peculiarly insignificant, strangely out of place. Yet it was thanks to these brown shadows of the forest and their very human wish to help me to get back to my wives and children on the banks of the Chinchipe that I was here at all. Without their timely assistance my body might now have been rotting under the trees in nowhere, and my spirit calling helplessly to the moon, like many another silent tragedy striving to make itself heard in the ocean of Eternity.

The remaining two hundred miles which had to be traversed before setting foot on the Pacific coast presented no particular difficulties after what I had gone through. My *cholo* friend had a donkey, which he put at my disposal for a consideration, and the day following my exit from the forest I loaded my gear on the animal's back,

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and in company with my host walked to the Chinchi. After a night's rest on the banks of the river I set forth on another long day's march, which brought me to Bellavista.

It was over arid wastes of loose gravel reverberating in the heat of a powerful sun, and such is the perverseness of human nature that, now I was once more in a parched-up valley without shade trees of any kind and not a drop of water to be seen anywhere, I almost wished to be back in the woods with my Indian friends.

As I supposed, Muñoz—being quite sure of the fate that would overtake me—had spread abroad a report of how he had been attacked by Indians and his companion (myself) killed. He had left some weeks ahead of my arrival, bound for Iquitos via Moyobamba, which would take him three months or more of hard travelling.

My journey to Jaen was but half a day's walk, and once within the confines of this decaying outpost of civilisation I was able, through the medium of much gold, to get mules immediately to carry me forward to Huancabamba. There is little need to dwell on this latter section of my travels; two ridges of the Andes had still to be crossed; they were not comparable with Calle Calle or Piscahuanuma, either in elevation or steepness, but in general they stood for a repetition of the evils already related in Chapters II and III.

It was indeed a marvellous sensation to be once more astride a mule's back and able to take in at a glance miles and miles of country, without a wall of vegetation blocking out the view. At Huancabamba I hired new animals, crossed the

SAFE AT LAST

last and most westerly ridge of the Cordillera, and then down to the wind-swept wastes of the Peruvian littoral. The great desert of Piura, with its soft white sands shifting hither and thither, was traversed at night, so as to better withstand the pangs of thirst, and on Saturday, November 9th, I set foot in Paita exactly thirteen weeks and a day since leaving Iquitos.

Let it here be noted by those who look upon Peru and the Upper Amazon as unhealthy and fever-stricken countries, that since the day I landed at Pacasmayo, up to the date I sailed from Paita, I had not experienced a day's sickness of any kind. Of medicines I had carried quite a stock, but they had all gone to relieve the pains of others who lived off the beaten track, where such things were unknown or unobtainable.

As to Muñoz, a few more words may not be out of place. On arrival in Lima I at once put my case before the authorities, and both Colonel Soyer, the prefect at Iquitos, and my friends there, were duly informed of what had actually taken place. Some months later, in London, I received notification that Muñoz, on arrival in Iquitos, had been given a sound thrashing by Mr. J. W. Massey, of the Booth Steamship Company, and that he (Muñoz) had then retired to jail for an extended period. When the time came round for the launch to make its yearly visit to his section of the river at Barranca, he was put on board and sent back in disgrace. But the story does not end here. Mr. C. R. Sharpe, of the Commercial Bank of Spanish America, wrote me some time later that he had seen the miserable fellow on board the launch before it

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sailed, and thinking he needed yet another thrashing to properly bring home to him the enormity of his misdeeds, promptly administered it.

The authorities regretted that more appropriate punishment could not be meted out, but nothing further could be done, they said, unless I came back in person to bring an action against him ; however, a cheque for ten pounds, which was the sum I had given him under pressure of circumstances, was enclosed, and a parcel containing several of my belongings—such as my leather camera case—was also returned intact.

So it came about that, thanks to the Peruvian Government, Colonel Soyer, the Commercial Bank of Spanish America, and the Booth Steamship Company, an extremely hazardous journey came to a successful end, and Muñoz received a lesson that he will be slow to forget.

Now, whenever I hear the patter of rain on the trees, my thoughts revert to those strange days spent on the Upper Amazon with my friends the Aguaruna Indians, and I look forward to the time when, mounted on a powerful aeroplane, I will be able to fly into their country and enjoy a yuca or toasted banana by their fireside. It is possible that they think of me once in a while—if so, it is with feelings of envy and relief, for did I not tell them that on the banks of the Chinchipe I had many wives and children waiting for me, and they were sad because I did not come home ?

